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# THE FUTURE

## Dec/Jan 2010









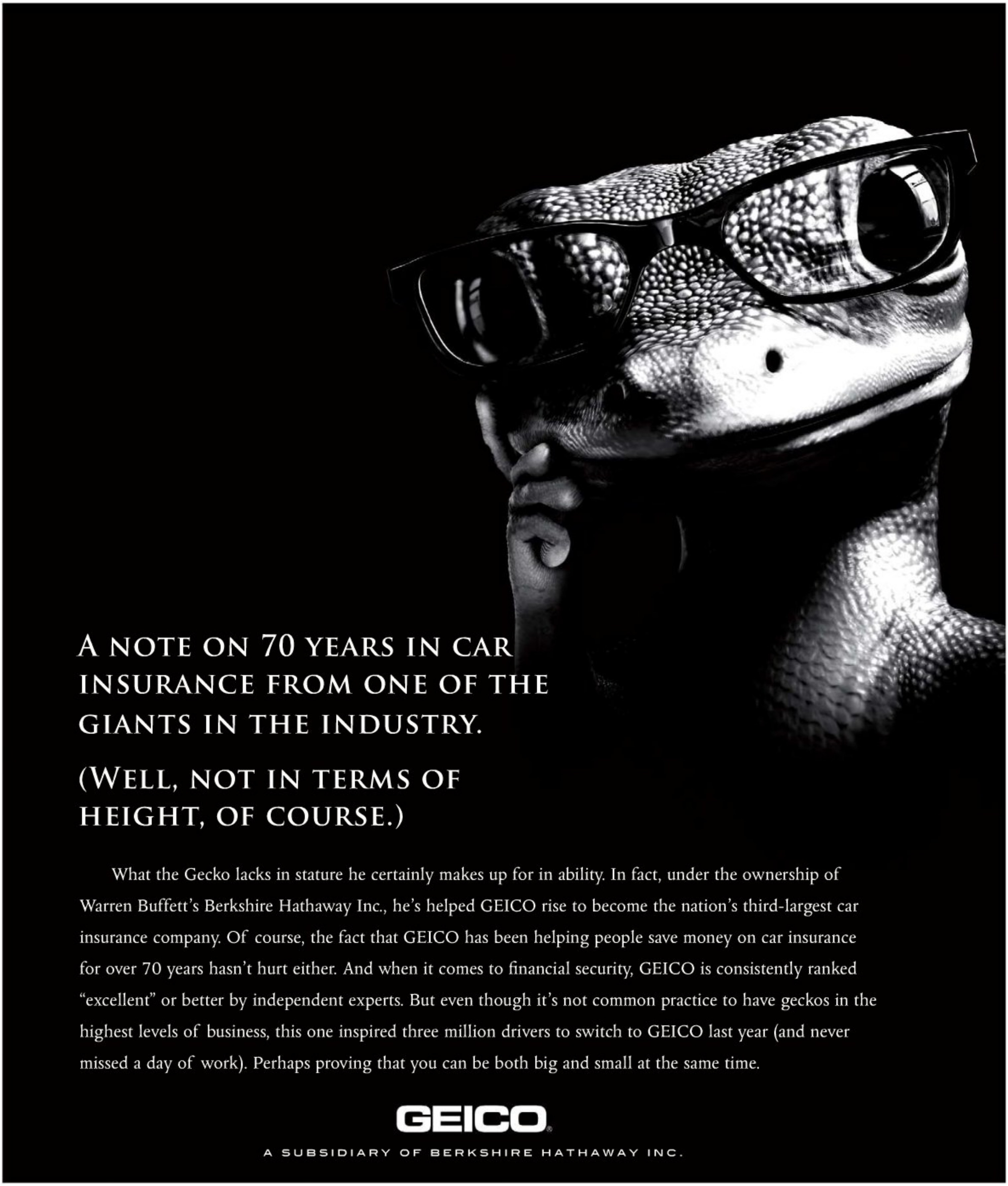



**Cover:** Y House, Saitama Prefecture, Japan, page 76
Photo by Dean Kaufman

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126



"No little kid has ever been in outer space. Without children, there's no future."

Bruce Sterling



42



# FUTURE OPTIONS

**Design is an expression of the moment we live in,** purposefully or subconsciously moving in step with political order, societal disposition, popular culture, and technological improvement. As time marches forward, our designs—from the clothes we wear to the buildings we inhabit—leave behind a physical record of our dreams and desires. An obelisk from ancient Egypt, a city plan by Baron Haussmann, flared jeans from 1969, OXO Good Grips; these all tell us something not only of the spirit of the time in which they were created but also of the direction in which their creators wished the world to move.

A shopper at Bed Bath & Beyond may see a spatula with a soft, ergonomic, and easily graspable handle as that and nothing more, but undoubtedly, its creator saw something else—the promise of a future where a certain arthritic sector of society would be able to enjoy cooking again. Of course, not all design is so noble, but even in the creation of the most questionable things there can be contained some shred of optimism. The atomic bomb, perhaps the most notorious product design of the 20th century, makes a fine example. Just as it is capable of horrific destruction, its creators may well have preferred to see it as a means to achieve and maintain peace.

The Finnish architect Alvar Aalto—witness to two world wars—captured these exact sentiments during a speech he gave in 1957: "There is an ulterior motive, too, in architecture, that is always peeping out from around the corner, the idea of creating paradise. It is the only purpose of our buildings. If we do not carry this idea with us the whole time, all our buildings would be simpler, more trivial, and life would become—well, would life amount to anything at all?"

At Dwell we have always shared a similarly hopeful outlook (perhaps one that some readers have at times found too hopeful). What attracted us to modern design was not the dogma or rigidity of statements like "form follows function" or "less is more" but rather the notion that by exploring and exploiting all the means available to us in the world today, modern design offers the surest foothold on the future—a step closer to paradise. The aesthetic, ideological, and technical improvement of our surroundings portends better things to come.*

In this relentless continuum of progress, it's easy to forget that the future will consist largely of where we have already been. Just as we do now, future designers will have to solve the problems left to them by previous generations—yesterday's need for more housing becomes today's question of how to address transportation, and so on. Granting then that in one form or another, all design deals with these temporal concerns, we've departed from our regular format with this issue to address topics that we feel will be of significance in the decades that follow—from groceries and lighting to density and community.

We have tried to stay away from the type of garish predictions that look silly in 20 years' time—the books I grew up with would have us all piloting flying cars and living in robot-attended geodesic domes by now. So, when approaching a topic, we solicited the opinions of recognized experts and attempted to pinpoint ideas at the vanguard of today that will likely be of increasing importance tomorrow. Paradise may remain just out of reach, but as Aalto attests, we can't stop trying to get there. ■

**If it's all about tomorrow, then couldn't we be criticized for having a few too many Eames chairs on our pages? Possibly, but compare any Eames design to the dreck cluttering your local Levitz, and tell me which embodies the rosier outlook.*

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**In response to "Product Design 101"** (September 2009):

Bad writer! Bad! You are hereby banished to *le maison de chien*! *Je suis un* French bulldog, and you have indeed offended my sensibilities. Before you criticize the product design of my breed, you should first walk *un kilomètre* in my paws, *non*?

Pardon my French, but you have really stepped in *le merde* this time! *Quel hypocrite*! Each of your insults to my breed apply *également* to your own two-legged selves. You complain that we are costly—this in a magazine with advertisements for Bauhaus dog beds that are *très* expensive.

Inbreeding? *Mon dieu!* You have insulted the foremost families of Europe! And the lesser families of the Deep South (see William Faulkner). Do not speak to me of genetic inferiority! *Certainement*, I snore. *Et vous?* My eyes do not protrude. You have former first ladies who cannot say that.

*Mon appétit* is very good, *merci*, and my stomach is *le* cast iron. But your article gave me dyspepsia. And *quel problème* do you have *avec* births via C-section? Our bitches have them for the sake of health and convenience. Do not those in your own office do the very same?

I could chew this issue of Dwell to pieces. *Mais*, instead I shall use it for a *pipi de pipi* pad. *En conclusion*, I give this article a paws down. I drool in your general direction!

*Vive le France!*

*Vive le bouledogue français!*

**Flossie Beignet Landon**
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

I wrote a letter to Dwell that was published in the February 2002 issue in response to the October 2001 "True Real Estate Stories" article and about the mid-century-modern home I purchased. I wanted to follow up with the tale of the amazing turn that's taken place since.

I knew when I moved into the house by the architecture and the details that it was more than just an average 1950s modern house. I spent almost a year researching everything I could to find more information about the architects and the story behind my home. The permits I pulled from when it was built in 1957 had no architect listed. I contacted some local mid-century-modern experts and even the architecture department at the University of Southern California, but to no avail. I pretty much gave up on ever knowing the story of the house. I was content just to live in it and enjoy it anyway.

One day in 2005, I heard a knock at the door. I opened it to find a woman who proceeded to ask me if I still had the mailbox that I had recently taken down. The mailbox had fallen apart and rotted; I had to replace it. It was gone, but she told me that her father had built the mailbox in the '50s and that she had grown up in the house.

She told me stories about how her father was an artist and had had the house designed and built by a local friend and architect. She was so

pleased that the house was still in good shape and hadn't been remodeled. I asked about her father as I grabbed a pen and paper to write down all of what she was telling me, including her name and number and that the architects were none other than Conrad Buff and Donald Hensman, of Buff & Hensman.

Both Buff and Hensman have passed away, but I was able to contact a partner of theirs, Dennis Smith, who still operates the firm (since updated to Buff, Smith & Hensman Architects, buffsmithandhensman.com). I called him to see if he had any old records, but he couldn't find anything; he said that not many records were kept before the '60s. I was able to talk Smith into coming to the house, however, to see if he could find any telling details to verify that Buff and Hensman were indeed the architects. He agreed but couldn't promise anything.

Smith was, at the time, helping to restore a Buff & Hensman house from the same time period. When he came by my house, he was able to identify not one but three indicators that Buff and Hensman designed the house. One was the unique way in which they designed and fabricated the tongue-and-groove ceiling—the exact same way they had done in the house that he was then restoring.

Smith left to return to his office and write a report for me. Not an hour passed before I received a phone call from John Grist, an architect who had worked with Buff and Hensman and now shared an office with Smith. Smith had told him the story, and Grist called to tell me that he remembered Buff and Hensman building the home and had actually been in the house shortly after it was completed.

For personal reasons, I have since sold the house and moved. I read too often of great architecture being torn down for a cookie-cutter McMansion and can only hope the new owners take care of my former home and continue its upkeep and restoration. I hope to encourage others that they can find other unknown gems if they are willing to dig deep into their own cities' architectural pasts. One day I hope to find another modern home of my own, too.

**Cole Gerst**
**Los Angeles, California**

**Correction: In the Dwellings section** of our September 2009 issue, we listed the architecture firm for the Macallen Building as Office dA. The project was, in fact, a collaboration between Office dA, the design architects, and Burt Hill, the architect of record. We regret the error.

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# Now online…

## Looking Forward

After reading about the future of design, what are your predictions about where we're headed? What will define luxury and timelessness in product design ten years down the road? Join the conversation at dwell.com. dwell.com/articles/luxury-and-timelessness

## Drivin' Movie

In the post-petroleum future, what will you be driving? Dwell's editor-in-chief Sam Grawe interviews experimental industrial design duo Mike and Maaike (below) about their driverless car design in this exclusive online video. dwell.com/car2040





### Alex Bozikovic

Alex Bozikovic is a Toronto-based freelance writer, an editor at the *Globe and Mail*, and a new dad. While speaking with the homeowners and architect of the Galley House ("The Future of Homebuilding," p. 84), he learned about infill housing and modern furniture design—and picked up baby-proofing tips, too.

### Justin Fantl

To shoot "The Future of Lighting" (p. 50), San Francisco–based photographer Justin Fantl had to embrace the technical difficulties of lighting not just one fixture but 15 highly designed LED lamps. "Each one exhibited its own characteristics and whimsy," Fantl says. "We aimed to create a dialogue between the peculiarities and shapes of each light."

### Mario Hugo and Nikolay Saveliev

Mario Hugo is a New York City–based artist who collaborated with fellow New Yorker Nikolay Saveliev to illustrate Augustin Scott de Martinville's ideas on luxury ("The Future of Luxury," p. 40). In the process, Hugo realized that though he spends an inordinate amount of time at his computer, he feels most luxurious in a quiet room with a pencil and paper.

### Dean Kaufman

New York City–based photographer Dean Kaufman touched the soil of three continents to shoot this month's features ("The Future of Density," p. 76; "The Future of Homebuilding," p. 84; and "The Future of Community," p. 92). He lunched on grilled cheese in Toronto and sashimi in Tokyo and had the chance to stick his finger in a true-to-life Dutch dike in Almere, Holland.

### Marc Kristal

Marc Kristal has long admired architect and professor Alice Min Soo Chun, whose Kid's Climb-It playground he wrote about for this issue ("The Future of Play," p. 46). Kristal, Dwell's New York contributing editor, recently penned *Re:Crafted,* a book about interpretations of craft in contemporary architecture.

### Dan Maginn

Kansas City–based writer Dan Maginn is a partner at El Dorado Architects and a 1989 Tulane University graduate. He dedicates his story ("The Future of Design Education," p. 31) to Tulane's staff and students—most specifically the 2009 "Katrina Class" that stuck around after the storm. He also gives a 1980s-style "slow clap" to Domilise's Po-Boys, which gave those who stuck around a great place to go.

### Travis Stearns

Travis Stearns is a Minneapolis-based freelance graphic designer, typographer, and art director. He worked with Dwell to create the custom lettering on the cover and throughout this issue, based on his Valley font, which builds off the notion of ball-and-stick form. Stearns's designs have also been featured in *Nylon* and *Wired*.

### Jim Stoten and Mike Perry

Jim Stoten lives and works in Suffolk, England, which is the sunniest part of the UK. So sunny, in fact, that Mike Perry flew there all the way from New York City to complete their illustration for this issue ("The Future of Play," p. 46). That's how nice Suffolk is. During the visit, Stoten and Perry drank lots of beers, laid down a record, and shot a video of their design process.

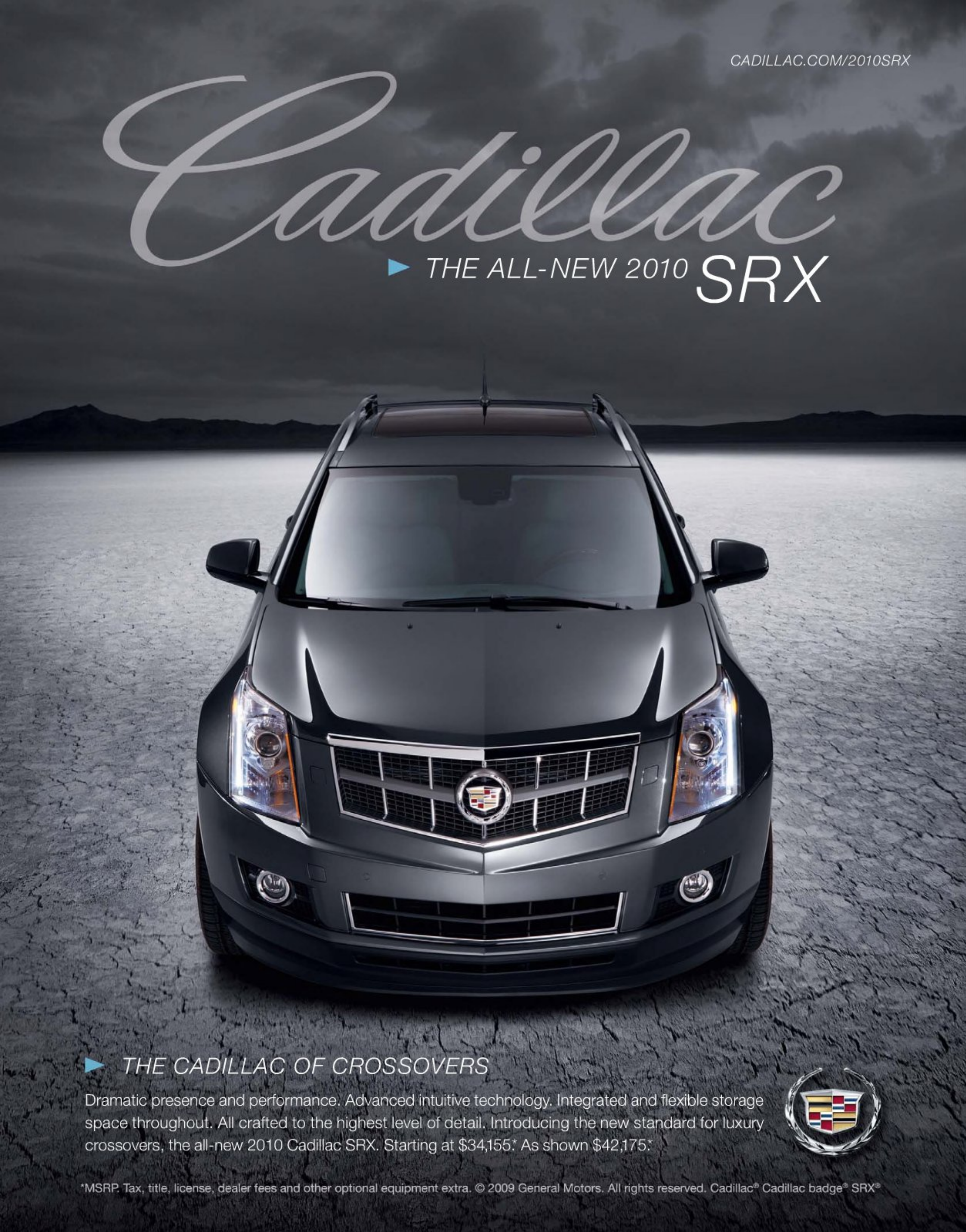
### Jane Szita

Jane Szita is an editor at design magazine *Frame*, based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands—a country with no shortage of star designers and architects. For this issue, though, she was happy to rub shoulders with the ordinary folk responsible for an extraordinary building: a bright orange communal villa ("The Future of Community," p. 92).

### Mimi Zeiger

Brooklyn-based writer Mimi Zeiger first wrote about architects Russell Thomsen and Eric Kahn in October 2001 ("Backyard Modernism"). For this issue, she turned her attention to their Y House in suburban Toyko ("The Future of Density," p. 76), where rice paddies were long ago dug up for row after row of housing.

Photo by Winni Wintermeyer


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What does "affordable" mean in post-Katrina New Orleans—a city with 30 percent residential vacancy?



What does "sustainable" mean in a city below sea level?

What should a "new" house look like?

## THE STORM

# Not So Big. Not So Easy.

**Even before Katrina delivered the** knockout blow, central New Orleans looked a bit like Mickey Rourke's face about halfway through *The Wrestler*.[1] In vital neighborhoods like the Ninth Ward and Tremé, the infrastructure of the place and the houses in which many New Orleanians lived were literally falling apart. Katrina merely intensified what was already a crisis.

After the storm, the remaining residents struggled to answer tough questions about the future of the city: What does "affordable" mean in post-Katrina New Orleans—a city with 30 percent residential vacancy? What does "sustainable" mean in a city below sea level? And what should a "new" house, one specifically designed for this urban, social, economic, and climatic context look like?

A group of Tulane School of Architecture students collaboratively scratched their heads on these questions and a few others as they tackled the fourth project of the university's URBANbuild studio: a 1,200-square-foot house in the Central City neighborhood aptly named "URBANbuild 04."[2] For them, a year's worth of hands-on architectural investigation resulted in a simple conclusion: No question worth asking has an easy answer, even in the Big Easy. ▸

Photo by Emilie Taylor

**Story by Dan Maginn**

[1] Lots of personality and pride, but in desperate need of some reconstructive surgery.

[2] The Tulane School of Architecture collaborates with Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans on the program.

## THE PROGRAM

Design-build programs are becoming increasingly popular in architecture schools across the country. More than ever, students are seeking actual work experience to balance the discipline's traditionally academic pursuits. Kenneth Schwartz, dean of the Tulane School of Architecture, believes that these programs have wide ranging value: "'Hands-on' means more than just swinging a hammer," he says. "URBANbuild helps the students understand the complexity of the social issues in neighborhoods beyond pure design."

Well-meaning students acquainting themselves with levels and plumb bobs in challenged urban areas may seem overly heroic to some,[3] but this couldn't be further from the program's intention. "URBANbuild is fundamentally different from a typical design studio," says Byron Mouton, its co-founder.[4] He thinks there is more to becoming an architect than learning how to design houses, and that URBANbuild is a path to acquire this expertise. "While it's important to create an affordable home, it's equally important to learn to work together as a collective," he says. "The program encourages the students to learn about all kinds of topics outside of design: project management, communication, marketing, public outreach, sustainability, construction. It gives each of our students, not just the best designers, a chance to shine."







## THE HOUSE

Like the three houses that preceded it, URBANbuild 04 began with a careful study of the Central City neighborhood. "Part of the research process involved studying the site context," Mouton says. "Understanding how residents use their sidewalks, porches, and yards was very important." The students spent a couple of weeks observing closely, then broke into groups and began to design. After a series of critiques, a single scheme was chosen.[5]

Given the enthusiasm of 26 energetic students, the house is striking in its restraint. URBANbuild 04 is a deceptively simple box with a straightforward three-bedroom floor plan—a modern adaptation of a New Orleans shotgun house. The house's public areas (living room, kitchen, and dining room) form an L-shaped block, which encapsulates the bedrooms and the bathroom core. The flexibility of this well-lit space, which connects the front porch of the house to its rear porch, helps make it feel larger than its square footage would suggest. In addition, the continuous volume provides cross ventilation, aided in part by a panelized storm shutter system that diffuses sunlight and protects the large windows from storms.

Few Central City residents are ambivalent about the appearance of URBANbuild 04, but even its detractors seem to appreciate the sincerity of its intention. "We've found they either like it or they don't," Mouton says, "but they all agree that it fits the scale and context of the neighborhood. A lot of them are just happy that something positive happened here." ▶





Photos by Emilie Taylor

[3] Howard Roark, Frank Gehry, Mike Brady... the profession has enough heroes already.

[4] The management of the construction process is itself a collaboration: Mouton teams up with Sam Richards and Emilie Taylor, who have been with the program from the start.

[5] The process was more akin to an intellectual cage match, starting with 15 designs, narrowed down to six, then two, before a final battle-scarred winner emerged.

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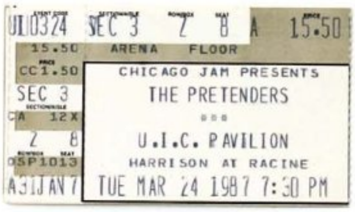
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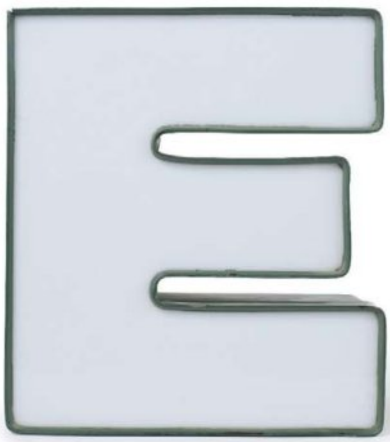

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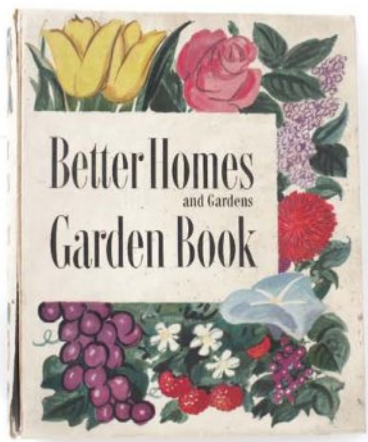
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09



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customer file  № 003 08 63899 022

Elizabeth Cochrane / Chicago Illinois

01 The bird house that I find too nice to put outside
02 Tin car sculpture picked up during a trip to Spain
03 My Orten'zia lamp I found at YLighting
04 A night that changed my life, Chrissie Rocks
05 The same box that healed all my wounds as a kid
06 Grass vase by Claydies
07 My light up sign that sits on my desk
08 Matchbook from a long weekend spent in Hollywood
09 Glass plate from our Honeymoon in Murano, Italy
10 My mother's garden book that started it all for me

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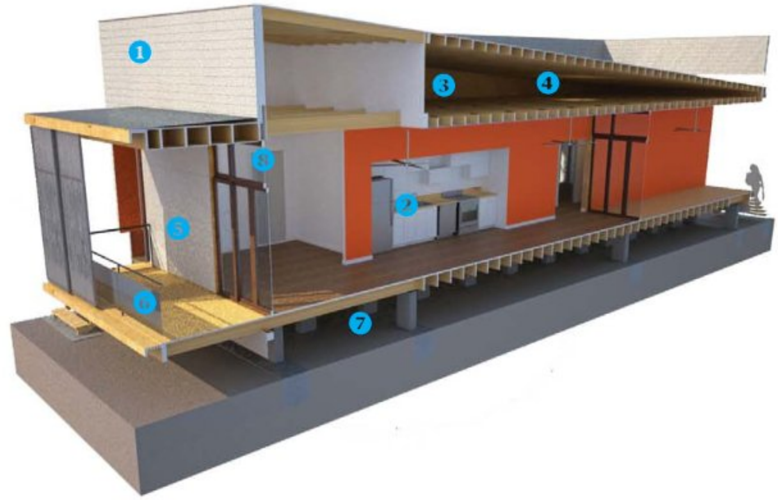
## THE LESSON

Although the house's simplicity, spatial efficiency, and use of controlled exterior space contribute to its affordability, students are quick to point out that the creation of a stand-alone prototype that can be mass-produced wasn't their primary focus. They learned that, unless you're in a situation where modular components or mass production can be effectively used, the real secret to saving money is to keep the square footage down and to limit the price of labor by simplifying the material palette and construction techniques.

Mouton agrees: "If we used conventional labor rates, this house would run about $150 per square foot, which isn't exactly affordable in this neighborhood. To not factor in the real cost of construction is disingenuous in a discussion of real affordability. In order to hit a market cost under $100 per square foot, you're talking about a house with very little detail. We'd have to simplify the house to the point where it would be hard to find enough things to do to fill a semester."

Mouton believes the focus of URBANbuild might shift in upcoming projects, however. "We're interested in tackling the affordability issue in one of the upcoming houses, in addition to maybe working on a renovation project," he says. "I see a very clear link between the two."

URBANbuild 04 reinforces the difficulty of attaining the holy grail of middle-class modernism: a shiny new house that is simultaneously supercool and fairly cheap. The idea that a thoughtful renovation of an existing house in a transitional neighborhood might be the most realistic way for the cash-strapped and design-minded to acquire their dream digs might not be as sexy as the idea of a brand-new home,[6] but to those without access to free student labor or discounted building materials, it's probably the most viable option.




**1. Breathable House Wrap**
Natural cross ventilation is preferred, but in a humid climate like New Orleans's, that's not always an option. URBANbuild 04 uses a house-wrap system to seal cracks and minimize air leakage while allowing moisture vapor to pass through. This translates to reduced energy consumption, improved indoor air quality, and mold prevention.

**2. Plumbing Fixtures**
The students used efficient plumbing fixtures and off-the-shelf fittings like faucet aerators to reduce the house's water consumption and its impact on the city's overtaxed sewer system.

**3. Hot-Water Distribution**
The compact design allows for an efficient water-distribution system. All hot-water lines in the house are fewer than 20 feet in length, which helps reduce the costs of initial material usage and energy consumption down the road.

**4. HVAC Equipment**
Most houses in New Orleans are typically designed for cooling loads: combining an air conditioner with a relatively inefficient heat strip for winter use. After analyzing long-term operational costs, the students opted for an energy-efficient heat-pump system instead. They worked closely with mechanical professionals to properly size it.

**5. Energy Star Appliances**
Though it's not much of a design trick, all of the appliances in the house are Energy Star-rated, which translates into operational savings of about $100 a year.

**6. Windows**
Builder-grade low-E insulated windows provide lots of diffuse daylight, improving color perception and reducing artificial lighting loads. East- and west-facing openings were reduced in number—or set back deeply—to help control direct solar heat gain.

**7. Insulation**
The students ramped up the overall R-value of the house well beyond standard construction. They used a soy-based spray-foam insulation under the floor, in the walls, and in the roof structure.

**8. Lighting**
All the lighting in URBANbuild 04 comes from compact fluorescents—reducing energy consumption and the internal heat gain that would have resulted from incandescent light usage. ▶

[6] Prefabrication has some potential in the grail quest, but a number of costs specific to the project's final destination are typically (and necessarily) excluded from the price, such as land acquisition, foundation design and construction, utility connections, building permits, and construction oversight.





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# CLASS DISMISSED



Even if it doesn't solve all of New Orleans's housing problems, URBANbuild makes an important contribution. Thus far, the program has produced four well-designed, well-built houses in a neighborhood starved for constructive action. Motivated students have honed their teamwork and construction skills, explored a diverse range of issues beyond the classroom, and challenged local residents' long-held assumptions about architectural expression.

The program succeeds because of the physical and emotional investment it requires from students and residents alike. Karla Valdivia, one of the URBANbuild 04 team members, believes that the intense experience of building a real house has profoundly affected how she'll practice architecture upon graduation. "I was surprised at the extent of work we all put in," she says. "Few of us had construction experience, and yet we were all quick to learn. What was hardest for me was probably detaching myself from the project after it was completed."



**School's In: Three More Design Programs We Love**



**Studio 804**
**studio804.com**
Students are swinging hammers and taking names at the University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Planning. Studio 804, led by Dan Rockhill, has completed 13 design-build projects since 1995. With a focus on prefabrication, modular design, and sustainability, the program squirts out talented alumni like fizzy water through a seltzer nozzle.

**CEDIM**
**cedim.com.mx**
Journey about 300 miles south of San Antonio, Texas, to Monterrey, Mexico, and you'll find yourself within the gravitational pull of CEDIM (Centro de Estudios Superiores de Diseño de Monterrey). Anchored in a great new facility, the school offers eight design-related career tracks—from architecture to fashion—each exploring where design, technological innovation, and business merge.



**EPFL+ECAL Lab**
**epfl-ecal-lab.ch**
EPFL+ECAL Lab in Lausanne, Switzerland, has an innovative design program that finds points of intersection between engineering technology, industrial design, art, and architecture by combining the forces of the University of Art and Design Lausanne and the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. Aside from challenging the perceived boundaries between these fields, the program actively reaches out to industry, bridging the gap between academic study and real-world markets and experience.

Photos by Emilie Taylor (group photo, URBANbuild exterior)



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# Evaluating Values

**Luxury, a term that once conjured images from *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, is now just as often used to aggrandize personal organizers, iPod cases, and websites. So we turned to Augustin Scott de Martinville, who heads the master's program in luxury and design at the University of Art and Design in Lausanne, Switzerland, to talk some sense about the future of this ever-shifting concept.**

**What's the most important idea for luxury designers to grasp?**

The first thing has to be value for money—a notion that is not always relevant in the world of luxury. But this notion must become very important.

**And the luxury goods of the future?**

It's a real cliché, but in the developed countries, people are saturated with food, products, and information. The constant solicitation to buy makes simple things like sleep, time, and relationships the real luxuries.

**Marketers like to talk about accessible luxury. Does that make sense to you, or is it just branding?**

The ultimate luxury is to have Swiss cheese and bread for lunch after a morning walk in the Alps. But it could also be a short sampan ride during a Hong Kong sunset. It's all about the right time and place, not the price. A $15 bottle of wine can be a luxury.

**What about the ethical ramifications of luxury, when the financial disparity between the producer and user can be preposterously large?**

I actually think that luxury, when synonymous with very high quality, is the most ethical field in which to work. Making luxury goods is the only way to preserve certain skills, techniques, and sometimes whole communities, in both developed and Third World countries. Skilled craftspeople can be found everywhere, from the French saddle maker to the village woman weaving raw silk in Cambodia. The challenge is to develop this potential.

**Is there a certain product that is pointing the way forward?**

A product that represents intelligent anticipation of future luxury is the Milgauss watch series by Rolex.

The engineers at Rolex developed a new material called Parachrom, which is resistant to magnetic fields [which harm mechanical watches], and integrated it into their Milgauss series, which was made for people working in research labs and power plants. Rolex could just live off its reputation and make gold versions of the watches it already came up with. But here you have true technical innovation.




**Story by Aaron Britt**
**Illustration by Mario Hugo and Nikolay Saveliev**


FLEXFORM



# Joy Ride



**Story by Sam Grawe**

**In 2008 a French journalist from** *Auto Plus* magazine was arrested for publishing photos of an unreleased Renault Mégane. An Internet search for the model raises the question of why anyone would be remotely interested in obtaining photos of this unremarkable five-door. But in the industry even the slightest shift in tail-light design is guarded like a state secret, and rabid journalists and enthusiasts do their utmost to detail every miniscule move the automakers make.

The irony is that despite all the pomp and circumstance, cars have changed relatively little over the course of the last century—most of us are still stuck behind the steering wheel of a gas-guzzling combustion engine-driven ride. This latency in product development is exactly what inspired San Francisco-based designers Mike and Maaike (Californian Mike Simonian and Dutch Maaike Evers) to transport themselves to the year 2040 and imagine what driving could become without, well, driving.

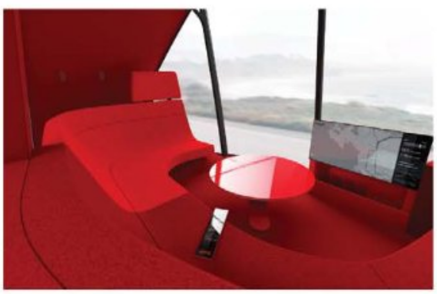
"The discussion lately has been focused on what's under the hood," Simonian says, "but that's not something that is necessarily going to change cars." Instead the pair looked to emerging technologies—like GPS devices, active cruise control, and even social networking—to devise a novel form of transportation centered on quality living and facilitating new experiences, without steering or having to observe traffic laws. "We thought that at the point when people trust these cars enough that they don't need a handheld control would be when cars would begin to look completely different. So rather than building a car around the idea of a driver, we built it around all of the passengers."

Not surprisingly, Mike and Maaike's ATNMBL (short for Autonomobile) takes many of its cues from their design experience in the world of furniture (note the resemblance of the interior to the pair's Mute chair) and technology (the car's navigation is an extension of the kind of functionality found on ▸

Somewhere between *Knight Rider*'s KITT and your living room lives ATNMBL, Mike and Maaike's concept for a driverless car.





their G1 Android phone). The result is akin to a souped-up Zaha Hadid living room on wheels that behaves like a really smart iPhone.

Because the ATNMBL would utilize our present infrastructure and share the road with piloted vehicles, Mike and Maaike kept the scale similar to today's autos—but that's where the similarities end. "We looked at architecture for inspiration, because if you change from a speed-driven, manually operated object to something that's essentially living space, the question of proportions will become much more of an architectural experience," says Evers. Indeed, floor-to-ceiling windows, wraparound modular sectional, sleek coffee table, and pop-up flat screen reads more like a listing for an upmarket condo than a want ad for a new ride.

So how does it work? "It's all voice controlled," says Simonian. "It will be very natural, as if you stepped into a cab and the cab driver was someone who knew you." Imagine ATNMBL storing directions like we store contacts in our phones, or easily being redirected after an onboard search for a last-minute movie listing or late-night Indian restaurant. Mike and Maaike even imagine downloading different driver profiles, other people's road trips, and, most intriguingly, a sort of Facebook-meets-ride-share program.

"When your car drops you off at work," Simonian explains, "it can actually go out and rent itself to other people within your trusted network."

"It's like a pool," Evers expounds, "so as you're lending out your car into the system, you're able to make money, whereas if you enter the system to ride, you pay a couple bucks."

Part of what makes ATNMBL unique is that the clients were Mike and Maaike themselves. After working for larger firms, the pair decided that when they launched their own studio they would allot a certain amount of time to self-motivated projects such as this. It keeps their thinking nimble and eventually pays for itself by helping win new business down the road.

"There have been some interesting reactions," says Simonian. "Gearheads see this as a big threat, while to other people the end of driving is like the end of washing dishes."

"It's important that people start talking about what they really want from cars or transportation," Evers asserts. "If we keep getting a little more styling, it doesn't really take us anywhere new. We wanted to stir up excitement and passion, which is why we deliberately did some things that are controversial." Given the current state of the auto industry, excitement and passion could be just what cars and drivers need.

## Meet ATNMBL

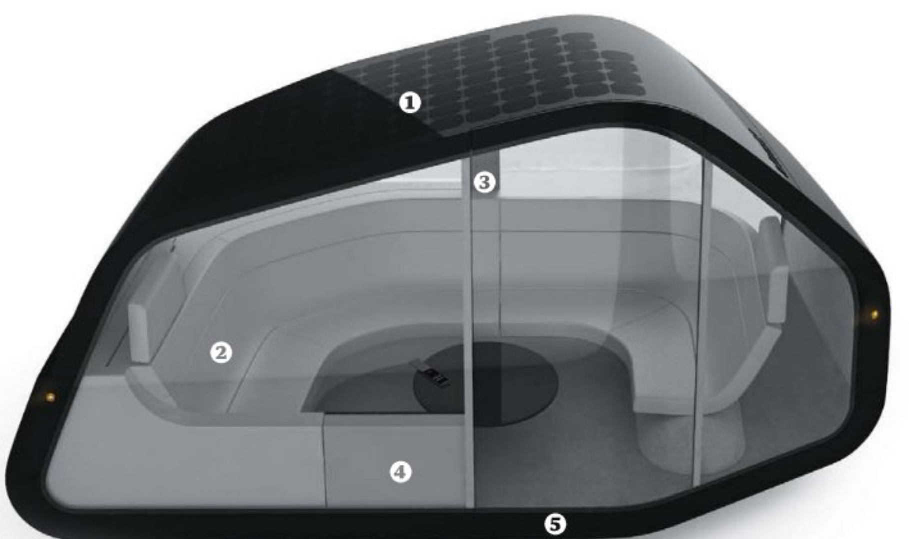
1. Electric power + solar-panel assist

2. Living-room-style seating for seven; electric power storage underneath seats

3. Driverless navigation with voice recognition

4. Optional screen for displaying menus, maps, and entertainment

5. Electric-powered motor within each wheel




Mike and Maaike's design goes far beyond styling to create an entirely new concept for transportation—including an operating system and living-room-like interior.

The pair deliberately forewent windows in the front and back of the vehicle to accentuate the notion of driverless driving. 1

@ See the video interview at dwell.com/car2040


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# Electric Slide

**For something that's meant to cele-**brate the pleasures of childhood, the playground sure has gotten old. The essential program—swings, slides, monkey bars—is as limited and predictable as the activities it's designed to promote. Though a playground may divert or entertain, rarely does it engender the kinds of social interactions that can meaningfully teach. It's true that even the most uninspiring variant will whip a kid into furious expenditures of energy, but the outcome is a small, if satisfying, harvest: a better appetite and a tighter night's sleep.

All of this caused professor Alice Chun to ponder how a 16,000-square-foot vacant lot in Stuyvesant Town, the Manhattan residential development where she lives with her husband and young son, might be used to change all that. "There are merry-go-rounds in Africa and India that generate energy," she notes. "Children play on them, and villages with no water or electricity are able to pump from wells and have light. If they're doing it there, why can't we do it here?" Consequently she put this playful challenge to the graduate students in the design-build studio she teaches at Columbia University.

The as-yet-unbuilt playground, which the students named Kids Climb-It, is an all-rubber, recycled, and recyclable environment featuring 18 tripods—constructed from steel pipes enclosed in rubber balls—with rope nets strung between them. As kids climb the nets, their motion activates generators in the tripods' peaks, which produce energy that's stored in underground batteries.

The net system—with eight distinct zones including ramps, tunnels, and vines—encourages children to use their imaginations to develop their own games. Some of the rubber balls on the tripods trigger lights, bells, and water misters across the entire landscape, and a time and energy stopwatch enables kids to calculate how much power their games can generate within a fixed time period. And because the netting zones have been designed to attract different age groups, Kids Climb-It also functions as a kind of neighborhood in miniature, teaching and encouraging children with varying skill sets, temperaments, and degrees of maturity how to interact with each other.

As a reimagining of the aesthetics of play, a more efficient use of public space, a producer of clean power, and a landscape that encourages young people to think independently, Kids Climb-It is more than simple recreation. It looks to be a model of what tomorrow's playgrounds, and citizens, might very well be. ▮



**Story by Marc Kristal**
**Illustration by Mike Perry and Jim Stoten**

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# A Letter from the Founder



As Founder and CEO of Evergreen Earth, I am honored to be part of the DWELL family and for this opportunity to connect with DWELL readers.

Evergreen Earth and DWELL understand that you expect the products and services you buy to be environmentally sensitive. With that in mind, Evergreen Earth has launched the Evergreen Mark.

We wanted to create a way for consumers to be able to tell at a glance that they are purchasing a product from a socially responsible company. Seeing the Evergreen Mark displayed will assure consumers they can trust that a product or service goes beyond "Green" and is the result of sustainable manufacturing practices.

We believe that the individual is the greatest agent for positive social change and that the choices we all make can alter the course of life on this planet for generations to come. We also believe that the way in which we balance innovation with our natural resources will not only determine our energy independence as a nation, but greatly enhance our quality of life.

The Evergreen Earth family of companies is dedicated to creating a "balance of power" through innovation, education, development, and operational services for all facets of renewable energy integration and sustainable building practices. Through the Evergreen Mark, we are also dedicated to helping smart consumers make design and buying decisions that will support a better world.

I founded Evergreen Earth fully embracing the idea that innovation is still at the heart of the American spirit and that we will continue to lead the new, global "Green" economy by our example.

Yours for a Greener tomorrow,

Gordon Hattersley III

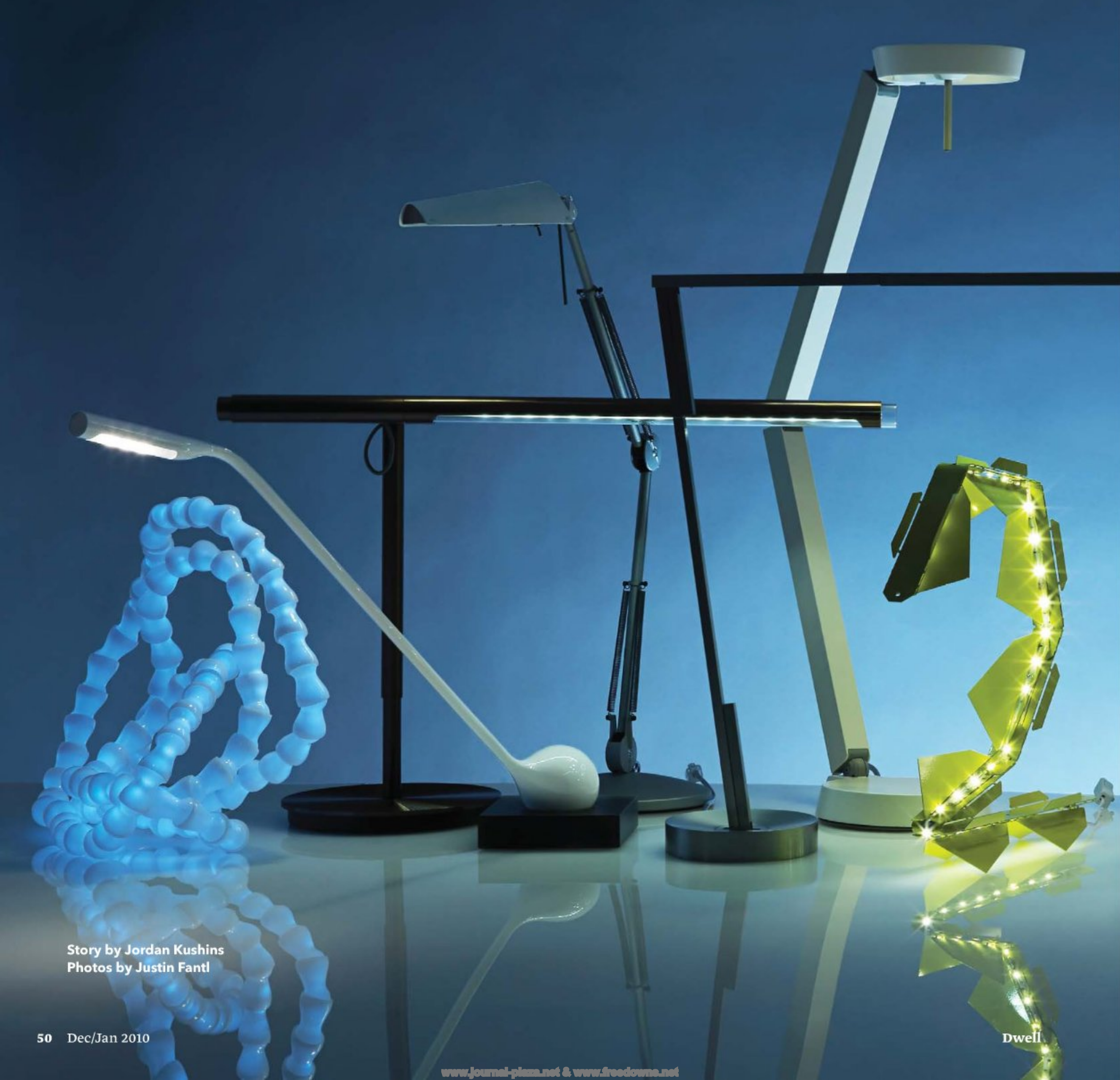
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# SHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIODE



Story by Jordan Kushins
Photos by Justin Fantl



**With the introduction of the com-**mercially viable incandescent bulb in 1879, our ability to control and apply light was forever altered. One hundred and thirty years later, as governments step up lighting regulations and energy concerns fuel the innovation of illumination, lights are undergoing another revolution, and light-emitting diodes are leading the charge.

Both smaller and more durable than incandescent or fluorescent bulbs, LEDs—which forgo interior filaments and photons for semiconductor diodes—expend less energy as heat than traditional types of lights, consume up to 75 percent less electricity, and last up to 50 times longer than an incandescent bulb—and almost five times longer than a compact fluorescent light (CFL), according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). In an effort to help consumers better understand the facts and figures, the DOE has developed an easy-to-read, Energy Star-approved Lighting Facts label for LED products that provides specific performance information, focusing on features like light output (measured in lumens) and color accuracy.

The potential of these products extends far beyond energy efficiency and savings. "LED solutions that work well in general illumination situations, like task or accent lighting in your home, are really just coming onto the market now," explains Mary Beth Gotti, manager at General Electric's Lighting & Electrical Institute. "But the really intriguing part of LED solutions moving forward is that we're going to learn how to apply light more effectively than ever before." As designers begin to experiment with the technology, fixtures employing it will become more fully integrated into our homes—in risers and stairs for safety and even furniture and furnishings.

Jaime Salm, cofounder of environmentally focused design studio MIO—and designer of the Trask lamp featured in our lineup—agrees, and he foresees a radical transformation. "How we light space, what constitutes a lighting fixture, and the service of light in all aspects of our lives will soon be redefined." It looks like there's a bright future for the nascent technology, and it has only just begun to shine.

**Forever replacing bulbs might fast become an act of the past as long-lasting, energy-efficient light-emitting diodes (LEDs) make their way into the marketplace.**




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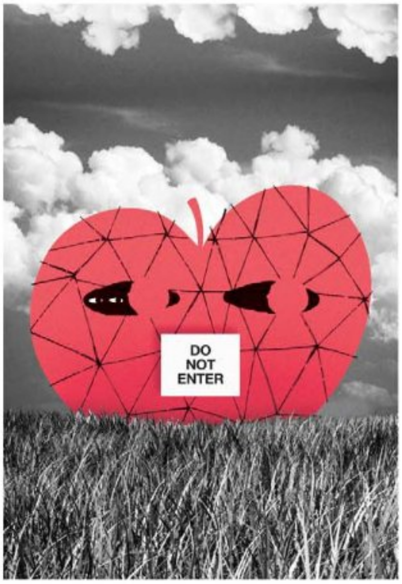
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**Though it's quite popular to proclaim that design can change the world, even the best-laid plans aren't enough to make a difference on their own. We spoke with three leading design agitators about how and why we all need to get involved.**




Bryan Bell is the founder and executive director of Design Corps, a nonprofit organization that provides architecture and planning services to promote positive development in communities. He is also on the steering committee of a new network called SEED (Social, Economic, and Environmental Design).

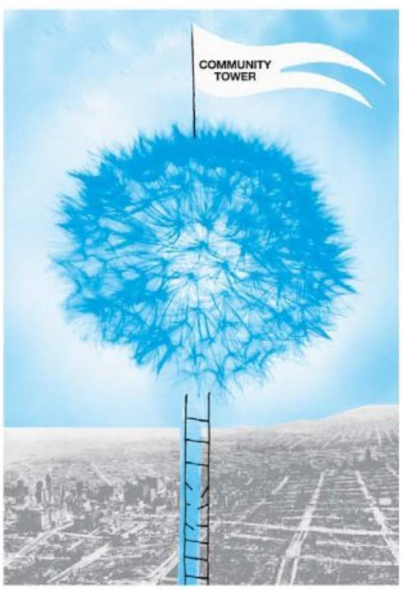
"The link between design and critical community and global concerns—job creation, disease prevention, rebuilding after natural disasters—is becoming clearer. Further establishing that connection will create a whole new field of relevant design.

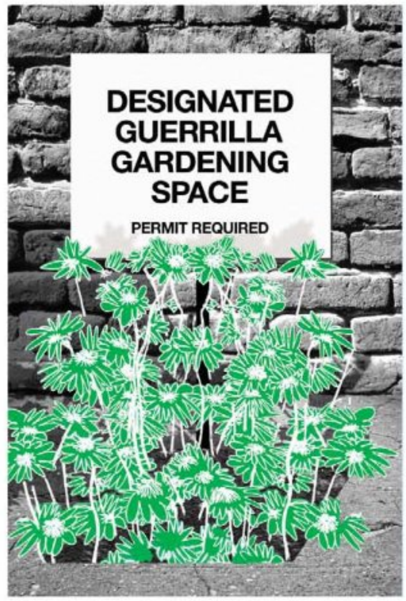
"I think that we're going to start to see more designers who aren't waiting to be asked to solve a problem or for an invitation to act; when they recognize a need, they will craft a built response to it. But you can't get it right unless the client and community are involved. Each of us has an asset we bring to a project, and when you put those assets together to effectively resolve an issue, that's incredibly powerful. We're not just looking for a practical solution; we're looking for poetry."

Fred Kent is the president and founder of Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization committed to helping communities develop their local public sites into people-friendly hubs.

"The role of public spaces—libraries, hospitals, courts, streets—is up for grabs right now. Rather than being defined solely by their intended functions, these spaces can, should, and, I believe, will become more holistic, multiuse environments. Good public spaces are accessible; there are things to do in them; they're places where you feel like you can socialize.

"The architecture profession has to stop focusing on building iconic buildings in lifeless areas solely to make big debuts and win awards. Instead, we should all be engaging the idea of 'architecture of place.' Identify what you want to do on that site and then design to support that purpose, or modify what already exists there to foster civic engagement: Start a market, plant a garden, or install a bench."




Richard Reynolds is the author of *On Guerrilla Gardening*, a practical, tip-filled guide chronicling the history of and modern motives behind the "illicit cultivation of other people's land." He speaks to aspiring green thumbs around the globe about how to get gardens started.

"The Internet has turned what was once a very disparate activity into a movement, and I urge people to utilize all the available online tools to document their gardening projects. It's also important to engage your community in good old-fashioned conversation, which, in this case, begins with direct actions rather than just words. These different forms of propaganda help to raise awareness, encourage more people to join in, and show landowners and communities what can be achieved on neglected land.

"There's a group in the UK called Incredible Edible Todmorden that focuses on growing local food, and their mission is to make their town self-sufficient by 2018. Though their efforts began as a form of guerrilla gardening, the group effectively convinced the local authorities that they were full of great ideas, passion, and determination, and now they have full civic support. The ultimate goal is to get more people involved; I don't believe that it has to be a constant battle."

**Story by Jordan Kushins**
**Illustrations by Michael Leon**


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# Marketing Strategy

**In 1955, photographer Elliott Erwitt snapped a photo of a bereted Frenchman riding his bicycle down a tree-lined road with a child and a pair of baguettes strapped to the rear. It's easy to imagine the trip the man is returning from, during which he probably visited not only the *boulangerie* for his bread but also the *fromagerie*, the *pâtisserie*, and the *charcuterie*.**

The notion of making daily trips to four different specialty shops to keep the larder stocked is hardly imaginable in the age of 100,000-square-foot superstores, but today's grocery shoppers are starting to take a cue from the romantic era when the distance from the wheat field and the baker's oven could be covered by bicycle.

While the next generation of grocery stores will make use of technology that would have once been unfathomable, many of those innovations will be used to close information gaps and shorten supply chains, making it possible once again for a shopper to see the face of the baker who made his bread, if only on the screen of his handheld device.

## SOURCE

Dara O'Rourke founded the website and mobile app GoodGuide to lift the marketing veil from consumer products and give shoppers better information about the impacts of what they buy. "Soon almost everyone will have Internet-enabled supercomputers in their pockets," O'Rourke says, "You'll be able to go into a store, scan a bar code, and pull up anything you'd want to know. There's going to be greater transparency about what's in products and where they came from. I'd be surprised if in five years we had a product recall and couldn't find out where the contamination originated."

●●●

Sam Mogannam started working at his family's small San Francisco grocery store when he was six years old. Some 30 years later, he has turned Bi-Rite into a thriving urban market and community hub where locally sourced products are a priority. Recently he established a farm north of San Francisco to create a direct source for Bi-Rite. In the future, Mogannam predicts, "big corporate chains will experiment with smaller formats," making it easier to maintain inventories of fresh, local food. "Our food supply is being manipulated to meet the demand of big chains. People don't need 400 cereals. It's all the same crap in different boxes."

## BUY

Cristian Campos, author of the book *New Supermarket Design*, has done extensive research into trends in grocery store design. "The evolution of supermarkets will come at the hand of digitization more than by the hand of 'pure' design," he says, predicting that software will soon "plan the placement of products according to the routes of consumers inside a store, time spent in each aisle, and the best-selling products in that store." But don't be fooled: These "digital improvements" will be hidden behind a more natural, low-tech aesthetic that speaks to heightened interest in healthy and ecological food. "Graphics and designs will imitate public markets with natural light, warm colors, lots of wood, softer lines, and higher prices."

## CARRY

Catherine Conway opened Unpackaged after testing the idea in a London market stall. The small shop sells bulk cleaning products, dry goods, and produce and encourages shoppers to bring their own refillable containers in which to take their purchases home. "We have loyal customers who are willing to change the way they do things. Now producers are getting in touch to see if they can sell products to us without packaging," she says. "It saves the manufacturer and the consumer money." ►











Photos by Multistorey (bulk detail), Günter Richard Wett/ATP Architects and Engineers (building exterior), courtesy Bi-Rite Market (garden), GoodGuide (iPhone detail)

**Story by Sarah Rich**

Using a mobile device (top), shoppers can get third-party information about their food. The lettuce grown at Bi-Rite's farm (middle top) doesn't travel far to reach the store.

Austrian supermarket chain Interspar (middle bottom) boasts high-tech, daylit stores. At Unpackaged (bottom), customers fill their own containers from bulk bins.


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## "Food design, if properly done, should eliminate superfluous packaging."



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Martí Guixé uses food as a medium for questioning social behavior and mass consumption. From designing edible ingredients to working with packaging and restaurant design, Guixé regards food as an object and a material for creative manipulation, rather than simply a source of flavor and energy. While graphics and messaging on packages can change consumer behavior to a point, rethinking the contents inside, Guixé argues, can go even farther. "Food design, if properly done, should eliminate superfluous packaging."

## STORE

Ted Selker, the former head of MIT's Context-Aware Computing Group, has developed numerous smart systems for the kitchen, including his prototype of the Living Food Green Storage refrigerator. "We asked, What if you take vegetables from an ordinary grocery store and, instead of putting them in a cold, dry refrigerator, give them light and warmth—treat them like flowers? Instead of embalmed, shocked veggies, we have living ones." Not all foods require uniform storage conditions. His concept provides compartments of various temperatures, light levels, and degrees of humidity.

●●●

Clive van Heerden leads innovation research for Philips Design. The company's recent Food Probes looked at how design can support changes in the way we eat and source food. The Home Farming Unit—one of three Food Probe concepts—is a small biosphere that contains live seafood and grows vegetables. It's a tool for self-sufficiency and energy conservation. "You would consume only what you need at a given time, reducing the need for refrigeration," explains van Heerden. "Supermarkets would adapt their storage and displays to sell live, growing produce, which would cut down substantially on packaging." ▥






Martí Guixé's I-cake (top) uses decorative features like icing to display each of the cake's ingredients as a percentage of the whole.

The Home Farming Unit (left) radicalizes the farm-to-table notion by putting the food source mere feet from the dining room.

The Living Food refrigerator (right) displays an exterior photo of its contents, saving energy by obviating the need to open the door.

Photos by Rick Friedman (Living Food kitchen), courtesy ImageKontainer (cake detail), rendering courtesy Philips Design (Food Probe)

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# Preservation Recommended



**With the preservation of mid-century buildings already a touchy subject—many people are still unwilling to see the value in preserving "modern" architecture—we asked three experts what the future of preservation will look like for modern, postmodern, and contemporary design.**

Theo Prudon is a professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University and the president of the modern conservation organization Docomomo U.S.

"I see two main pressures exerting themselves on the future of preservation: density and temporality. Around the world, most of the population is along the coasts, and as populations increase, we're going to be putting more pressure on places that are not developed or are underdeveloped. That means that preserving low-density sites will be increasingly difficult.

"As for temporality, a postmodern building comes from the era of the five-year lease, not the 99-year lease, and that economic reality affects the building's physical reality. It's just not as well made, yet it's far more complex than something from the 19th century. Complex, less-well-made buildings are tougher and more expensive to save, so the time to find more creative ways to use them will come sooner than ever."

Sharon Park is the associate director of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, a division of the Office of Planning and Project Management at the Smithsonian Institution.

"The green movement is interested in retaining usable buildings and not sending them to the landfill, which is great. But to do that, its supporters push renovation, not restoration or rehabilitation. I want to preserve the historical character of a building—like a brutalist building or maybe a 1950s modern office building now slated to become apartments—but I get nervous when we lose the historic details of a great old building so that a developer can score an extra LEED point for reuse. Preservation and reuse aren't the same thing.

"Here in Washington, DC, a lovely modern apartment building was recently outfitted with new, more energy-efficient windows, and that's great, but that building has lost some of its really wonderful, sleek lines. You could say I'm being overly precious, but it's not the same. Maybe that's the price we have to pay to revitalize our communities."

Peter Alspach is a mechanical engineer and an associate at Arup.

"One of the challenges I see for buildings that have not gotten some historical designation or been added to the National Register—I guess you'd just call them old buildings—comes from present energy-code requirements and upgrades. Look at a building from the 1940s or '50s,essentially designed to function without air-conditioning, and on paper it looks like it should be an energy pig, but in practice it's actually pretty good, because the building has good bones and makes use of daylight and natural ventilation. But you may not see that if you just base upgrade scenarios on how many panes the windows have or wall construction. If you're forced to make particular upgrades, instead of looking at the whole energy picture, saving the building can become cost-prohibitive for the owner.

"If we move to a system where we take the whole building's energy performance into account, we can get a really high-performing building out of something that might otherwise have been torn down. Lots of people are starting to do it this way now, but this method needs to be sealed up in actual city codes and ordinances across the country."

**Story by Aaron Britt**
**Illustration by Andrew Holder**


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# Piece by Pearce

Peter Jon Pearce caught Charles Eames's eye with a sophisticated bent-plywood lounge chair he made in college and was soon offered a job. Flash forward 50 years to Malibu, California, where Pearce's new EcoHouse prototype is the culmination of a lifelong quest to hone in on the basic principles that drive good design.



The Pearce EcoHouse, a prototype for a fully sustainable prefab home, will soon be erected in the Santa Monica Mountains.

**Story by Sam Grawe**

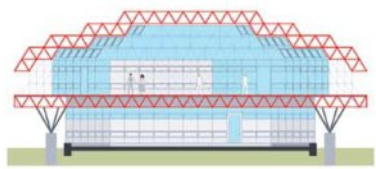


### High-Performance Design

Evolving from the principles Pearce developed over the last 40 years, the prefabricated steel space-truss structure provides maximum stability, volume, and area (3,138 square feet of open, column-free space to be exact), with the minimum amount of materials, density, and surface area—in keeping with what Pearce terms "high-performance design." With attention down to the last nut and bolt, Pearce designed and planned for each and every piece required in the construction. He likens the unusual-looking home to a modern-day indigenous building, which satisfies the basic needs of shelter in the simplest way possible by using the best materials that are available.

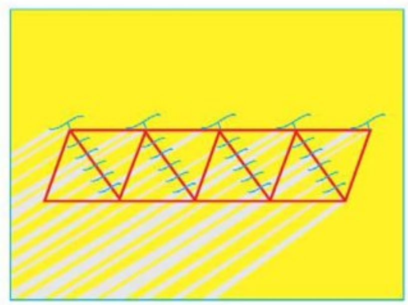




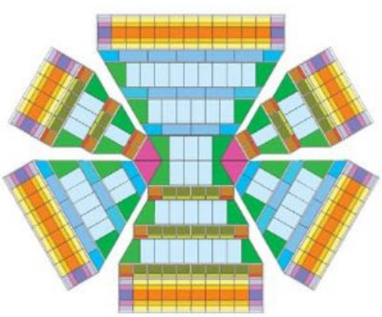


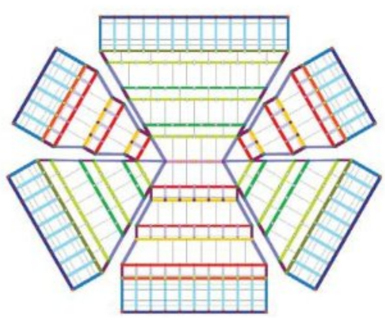
### Glass Enclosure

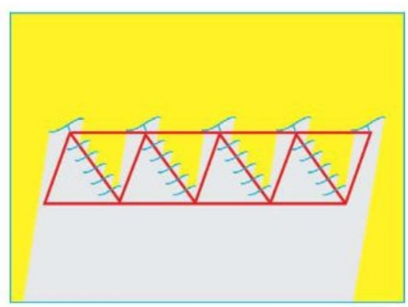
The insulated glass enclosure consists of 96 operable windows around the exterior and 48 operable windows in the ceiling, which allows for plenty of day lighting and 360-degree views. Unlike the design Pearce developed for the Biosphere 2, here the glazing sits inside the space-frame structure. An onboard sprinkler system will keep the windows clean and the home safe from wildfires.



December 21, noon







June 21, noon

### Glazing Panels

"When you're building a ship or an airplane you don't show up with a piece of aluminum and decide what to do with it; everything is planned in advance," Pearce notes. The above diagrams are "unfolded" color-coded plans of the various pieces involved in the glazing system (panels, left, and framing components, right).

### Shading

A louver-based "climate management canopy" (above) allows for maximum solar radiation in winter and minimizes thermal gain in summer.

All of the building materials used in the EcoHouse will be prefinished and prefabricated offsite. No skilled labor will be required onsite during construction.

Once the house has been constructed, Pearce will be able to make more EcoHouses using the tooling for all the constituent parts.

# Future Perfect

Marcel Breuer's Wassily chair, the Eames lounge chair, George Nelson's Ball clock, and Giancarlo Mattioli's Nesso lamp are just a few of the prodigious products that one might claim are timeless. While thousands of the objects we produce each year fall into obscurity without so much as an adieu, a select handful manages to survive and flourish with the march of time. The reasons for this are largely indecipherable—popularity, technological advances, sales, usefulness, beauty, and whimsy, to name a possible few. The only true measure of timelessness is time itself. We asked four design minds to stake their bets on a design from the past decade that will hold up to tomorrow.

**Rob Forbes on the Vélib' Bicycle**

**Andrew Blauvelt on the iPod**

**Philip Wood on the Link Lamp**

**Birgit Lohmann on the Vegetal Chair**



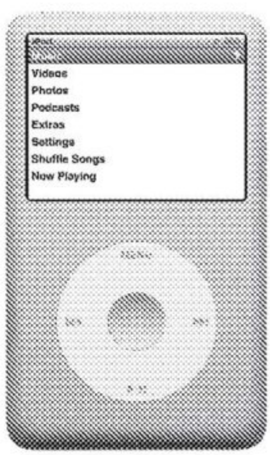







Photo by Peter Belanger (iPod)

Story by Sam Grawe












## Rob Forbes on the Vélib' Bicycle by JCDecaux



**Rob Forbes is best known as the founder of Design Within Reach, which he started in 1999. He left the company in 2007 to create Studio Forbes, which concerns itself with issues of design, culture, and commerce. Studio Forbes recently launched Public, a company focused on alternatives to the car.**

"If you travel a lot and pay attention to changes in the urban landscape, there is one obvious addition to almost every truly modern city: the bicycle. While bicycles have been present in some form on our streets since their invention, credit the French Vélib' program for their popular resurgence. The Parisian Vélib' will be the reference point for smart urban transportation in the 21st century and stands as an icon of timeless design today.

"There are currently 20,000 of these bikes on the streets of Paris—and another 3,000 in the suburbs. You can ride them for a little over a dollar a day, and ridership is estimated at about 78,000 trips per day. Now that's a real solution for traffic, pollution, mobility, health, community, efficiency, and fun.

"Maybe what I like most about the Vélib' is that it is humble. Many have tired of modern design that serves the wealthy few. Here is a common object repurposed to serve an entire urban population. Many design icons of the past—like the paperclip, the Aalto stool, the Eichler house, and the Golden Gate Bridge—are all very democratic in intent and share this humility."



## Andrew Blauvelt on the iPod by Apple



**Andrew Blauvelt is design director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition to producing all of the museum's collateral, including catalogs and exhibition graphics, Blauvelt also curates design-based exhibitions, such as the recent *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes.***

"I'm not sure I believe in 'timeless' design. Design is certainly 'timely' in the sense that it is a product of its technological, social, and cultural context. In this way, objects can be responsive to their times, even anticipate the near future, but they do not telegraph their immortality. I do believe that we can have iconic designs as well as objects that have been essentially perfected in their form and function over the course of many years. From the past decade, the first decade of this millennium, it is increasingly difficult to find something that you think will last forever, and maybe that's the most defining characteristic of this new century: constant evolution and technological change.

"In this spirit, I chose Apple's iPod. Building upon the Sony Walkman (1979) introduced more than 20 years earlier, the iPod is an archetypal object, defining a new genre of portable digital-music players. The iPod—from its classic mechanical scroll wheel to the streamlined and downsized Nano and Shuffle players to the iPod Touch—epitomizes the kind of relentless product evolution and technological obsolescence that characterizes industrial design in the digital age. A true object of desire since its introduction in 2001, the iPod captures the idea of 'aspirational design' perfectly, something that Apple does so well—the ability to show the public something new it might not even know it needed or wanted, instead of simply mirroring the known tastes and expectations of the public back to itself. The iPod is a 21st-century classic to me because it is an object whose success is also supported by a business innovation, the iTunes Store. The iPod is a portable device tethered to the digital network: It allows us to be both isolated and connected." ▶

## Philip Wood on the Link Lamp by Peter Stathis



**Philip Wood is the founder of CITIZEN:Citizen, a company that thrives and even preys on the boundaries of commercialism, cultural commentary, art, and design.**

"Peter Stathis's latest lighting project, the Link lamp, is his most concise to date, and I think it's destined to become a classic. Link, which is greater than the sum of its considered, minimal, and pared-down parts, is a contemporary rethink of an iconic form. Not only does it offer us a simple tautology on function and form, but, in the process, it has aided the development and implementation of cutting-edge, custom technology while setting a new industry benchmark for cradle-to-cradle design.

"Performance and simplicity are its expression, yet it never loses any of the playfulness that characterizes task lights. The ubiquitous wires, cables, springs, and balances that allow the cantilever to perform in an industrial age are deftly swept away by Stathis's experienced design sensibility and replaced by an elegant armature that articulates the form, is a conduit for the power, and brings us safely to land in the 21st century. Link is an example of design at its best."



## Birgit Lohmann on the Vegetal Chair by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec



**Birgit Lohmann is the cofounder and editor-in-chief of popular online destination Designboom. As a designer and consultant, she has collaborated with a pantheon of Italian designers, including Achille Castiglioni, Renzo Piano, Enzo Mari, and Bruno Munari.**

"I believe the Vegetal chair, by French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec in collaboration with Vitra, will be a timeless icon. It is a chair for indoors and outdoors whose contours seem borrowed from nature. It features asymmetrical branch structures woven in three levels to form a slightly irregular seating shell.

"The original idea came from historic garden chairs of English origin, structured in boughs of cast iron, and from chairs 'grown' with actual trees in the U.S. during the first half of the last century. The guiding question for the Bouroullecs was how to construct a mass-produced plastic chair that would most closely approximate the idea of a naturally grown chair.

"As the brothers note in an essay about the making of Vegetal, plastic chairs usually fall within two distinct groups: Either the shell is fixed to the base (or legs), or the entire chair is molded in a single piece. For Vegetal, the seating shell is cast together with only the front legs; the back legs have been kept separate. (They are glued to the structure later.) Calculating the dividing line of the two parts without creating a ridge was a difficult process. Another important stage in the development process was transforming the branch shapes of the seating shell, circular at the outset, into a T-section. This solution gives better structural and ergonomic qualities while at the same time meeting the demands of injection fluidity. Flat on the upper surface and textured on the underside, the chair is stabilized by the ribs that grow out of the supportive legs.

"The complexity of this design posed several questions of industrial feasibility—in fact, this chair has been redesigned a thousand times, and development went on for four years. It finally went into production in 2009."


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Sandra Wheeler and Alfred Zollinger, Matter Practice, Ecotopiaries, 2006. Photo: Harry Zernike

THE FUTURE OF DENSITY
Saitama Prefecture, Japan

"It takes a shift in cultural understanding about how to do more with less."

—Russell Thomsen




THE FUTURE OF HOMEBUILDING
Toronto, Canada

"I was surprised that these guys had picked out this property."

—Donald Chong




THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY
Almere, the Netherlands

"We don't necessarily see each other every day. Often, we just say hello when leaving or coming home again."

—Paula van Dijk



The black facade of the Yatabes' house may turn a darkly futuristic face to its suburban block, but behind it the house is full of light. In Saitama, a tightly packed neighborhood near Tokyo, the black metal screen affords the family privacy without sacrificing outdoor space.



# TIGHTLY KNIT

**Drawing on an inherited plot of land, his father's steel company, and his brother-in-law's architectural know-how, Motoshi Yatabe's new house is all in the family.**

**Story by** Mimi Zeiger
**Photos by** Dean Kaufman

**Project:** Y House
**Architect:** IDEA Office
**Location:** Saitama Prefecture, Japan



**Motoshi Yatabe grew up on a quiet, almost rural** street in Japan's Saitama Prefecture. There was a vegetable garden in front of his childhood home and a rice field across the street—plenty of room for him and his sister, Masako, to play. Sited roughly 15 miles outside of central Tokyo, it had yet to be colonized as part of the Greater Tokyo Area. Today, each block is lined by single-family homes packed shoulder to shoulder like commuters on a Tokyo subway.



Local stonemasonry across the street

To say that Tokyo is dense is to trade in old aphorisms: salarymen in capsule hotels, bento box–size houses, minivans that are truly mini, and sidewalks that pulsate with throngs of people. The spaces that result from these conditions (the best of which marry pricey real estate with high design) are fetishized, especially in the West. But suburbs like Saitama, which was established as its own city in 2001, have grown over the past 30 years to tell a different story. What began as loose sprawl has grown denser and denser.

Yatabe, along with his parents and sister, moved out of their old house before development boomed, but the family held on to the increasingly valuable property. As the neighborhood matured, so did Yatabe. He's now married to Yukiyo, has two young sons, and works for the family business, Yatabe Steel Fabrication. The company was founded by his grandfather after World War II and was handed down to his father; Yatabe is next in line.

In 2005, he began talking to Masako's husband, architect Russell N. Thomsen, about building a new home on the Saitama lot. (The old house had been razed years earlier.) "I have wonderful memories about the old house where we grew up," Yatabe recalls. "I wanted that same feeling in our new house. I wanted it to be a place where our families could get together, where friends would enjoy visiting." Thomsen began working on the design in 2006, when he was teaching at SCI-Arc's study-abroad program at Kyoto Seika University for a semester.

Back in the States, Thomsen's and partner Eric A. Kahn's Los Angeles–based firm, IDEA Office, working with Ron Golan, translated Yatabe's desires into a straightforward program: a master bedroom, bedrooms for the boys, a hobby/office space, and a lofty main room to accommodate living, dining, and cooking. At 1,000 square feet, the two-story house efficiently answers the family's needs. ▶

**Y House**
**Floor Plans**

**A** Master Bathroom
**B** Master Bedroom
**C** Office
**D** Entry
**E** Garden
**F** Carport
**G** Bathroom
**H** Kitchen
**I** Living/Dining Area
**J** Terrace
**K** Bedroom
**L** Study/Playroom




**First Floor** **Second Floor** **Third Floor**



Slotted between the street-side enclosure and the living area is a breezy second-floor terrace. Brise soleil slats shade the interior. Yatabe's steel fabrication company created the robust, trusslike armature that extends from the house to support the deck and facade.



However, with a black metal facade on the street, it doesn't immediately resemble the kind of inviting abode Yatabe envisioned. The tight, south-facing site complicated matters, leading the architects to screen for both sun exposure and privacy. Local typologies offered few clues. In response to growing density, zoning regulations control the height and setback from the street, so homes in the neighborhood all follow a similar pattern—boxy profiles that feature shallow balconies and meager gardens.

By pushing the facade toward the street, the architects liberated the design from these restrictions. Hidden behind the black enclosure is a glass facade that looks onto an ample outdoor space open to the sky: a shady garden on the lower floor and a sheltered terrace just off the living room on the second floor. (A steel *brise soleil* keeps the south-facing glazing cool.) Painted white, with a perforated screen to shield the garden from the adjacent property, the space is luminous. Each room in the house enjoys views of the garden and terrace, where the quality of light changes throughout the day. A single maple tree and pots of bamboo add touches of green.



Plants thrive on the sheltered terrace.

The house's steel structure, including the robust frame that extends from the house to support the metal facade, was fabricated by Yatabe's company. He personally oversaw every beam and bolt. "To be honest, it was very hard to work on. The workers at our factory found it very challenging to realize the design, but in the end they were proud of the result," he says. Even Yatabe's kids, Taiga and Kouga, get into the family business: They climb the exposed part of the steel structure as if it were a jungle gym.

Despite its severe face, the house is not a fortress. Fulfilling Yatabe's desires, it is bright, open, and welcoming. The architects took a delicate approach to the folded-metal facade. A careful incision reveals the front door, while the southern sun reaches the interior via a large rectangular opening cut into the house's taut skin. Here, the terrace spot connects with the city. "Our younger son, Kouga, likes the terrace because he can see the sunset from there," says Yatabe. "We are surprised that so many of our son's friends like to come and play at the house—almost every day. They really like to come to this house, and maybe not so much because of our son," he teases.

Although the distinctive structure sticks out on the block, it does take some inspiration from vernacular Japanese architecture. Outdoor living is part and parcel of Los Angeles architecture, and the European and California modernists do inform IDEA Office's work. But Thomsen was also influenced by *machiya*, townhouses typical of the Kyoto area, which feature small courtyard gardens that similarly relate inside and outside. As much as Thomsen draws on tradition, in Japan he's a Western architect. And he's okay with that. "I'll always be a foreigner, but ideas from the West have always been incorporated, tweaked, and made Japanese," he notes.



Green tea and a sweet for a guest

Indeed, one space that makes the house so comfortable is what's locally referred to as the "LDK," for living, dining, and kitchen. It blends Eastern and Western sensibilities, and with no walls between the different areas and a 12-foot-high ceiling, it's a spot for the family to gather and entertain. It resembles a loft, but it's also like traditional Japanese houses where shoji screens make it possible for rooms to be flexible, not dedicated to a single purpose. A prefab kitchen and custom-made storage cabinets line its perimeter, but otherwise the room is simply defined by what you put in it—couches or tatami mats. "It's a space that cuts across cultures," explains Thomsen. "It represents an informality that is more prevalent in Japan these days."



The family's two cats, Baron and Jula

Cultural exchange was a literal part of the design and construction process. IDEA Office collaborated with Tokyo-based architect Masao Yahagi. Once the scheme was set in Los Angeles, a final model was shipped overseas. Yahagi developed the construction documents, engineering and drawing the house to meet local standards, and set up a construction blog, so IDEA Office was able to see daily posts.

"I have wonderful memories about the old house where we grew up. I wanted that same feeling in our new house."






The family's hub is a high-ceilinged main room on the second level (above). It's open and casual and gets lovely morning light. Called the "LDK," for living, dining, and kitchen, the space is flexible—a blend of Western loft life and traditional Japanese homes, where rooms are multipurpose. White prefabricated cabinets and countertops make for a streamlined kitchen (bottom right). A pint-size "work-station"(bottom left) for the boys on the third floor overlooks the garden.







The house offers endless opportunities for Taiga and Kouga to play: The brothers climb high up in the outdoor steel structure, and the open-tread stair leading from the garage to the second-floor living room sets the stage for a Star Wars-style duel. "Everyone stops to look at the building," says Motoshi (opposite). Neighbors may stare at the severe facade, but once inside they are amazed with the quality and comfort of his home. Its efficient design comes from IDEA Office's clever rethink of local zoning regulations and required setbacks.



During the process, Thomsen returned to Japan several times to work on details.

There's potential for the exchange to go both ways. Back in Los Angeles, Thomsen considers how the house could influence his hometown. "Good architecture is not necessarily big architecture," he says. "Smaller buildings, such as this house, can challenge the creativity of an architect in unexpected ways. It takes a shift in cultural understanding about how to do more with less." In California, it's unsustainable to keep building subdivisions. The Japanese embrace of density is not dark and dystopic as imagined in science fiction, but light-filled and efficient. Most importantly, it still feels like home.



Neatly ordered desktop ephemera

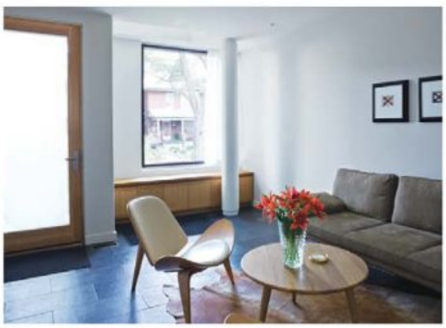


Facing tight building codes and an even tighter space, Karen White and David MacNaughtan needed an architect who could turn lemons into lemonade. Donald Chong devised a refreshing solution.



# Slim fit





**When most families decide to put down roots,** they look for big, accommodating houses with broad stretches of yard. Stroll down Galley Avenue in Toronto's leafy Roncesvalles neighborhood and you'll see plenty of homes that fit the bill—tall walls of red brick a century old.

Then there's the exception: a narrow modernist composition of glass panes and purple brick that slips like a bookmark between two older buildings. This is where Karen White and David MacNaughtan made a new home for themselves and their two boys—a bright three-story abode on a lot narrower than most suburban driveways.

"I was surprised that these guys had picked out this property," says the house's designer, Donald Chong. When he first saw it, it held a ramshackle 800-square-foot cottage, the oldest and shakiest building on the street. And the lot was tiny: "Squint and you'd miss it."

But for White and MacNaughtan it represented opportunity. They'd been living in the area off and on for more than a decade, enjoying its mix of deep-rooted Eastern European families and a growing creative class. When they found the site, they were living in a nearby loft with their first child and thinking about the future with a very specific lifestyle in mind. "We wanted to have a contemporary environment and have room for a family," White says. Not only that, but they wanted "to support contemporary architecture and create a community of people that we could build a project with," she adds.

Chong—a friend of a friend—was the first link, a young local designer who was just launching his own architecture practice. White, an interior designer and professor of design history, and MacNaughtan, who works in finance, bonded with Chong on the history of modernism and on hockey. "Karen knew all about Peter Behrens," says Chong. "On top of that, Dave is a goalie, and so am I."

With Chong signed on, the couple purchased the Galley Avenue property and faced the test of fitting in a family home. It was just 16 feet wide, with ▸

Karen White, David MacNaughtan, and their sons, Griffin and Finlay, hang out on the front deck (opposite), which lines up next to the neighbors' porch. Just through the front door is the living room (left) where built-ins by Chong share space with a three-legged Wegner chair and photographs by Arnaud Maggs. From the second level of the house, Griffin climbs the stairs his own way (below). At the top, the view from the roof deck (above) reveals a patchwork of garages and yards surprisingly free of neighbors.



**Story by Alex Bozikovic**
**Photos by Dean Kaufman**

**Project:** Galley House
**Designer:** Donald Chong
**Location:** Toronto, Canada





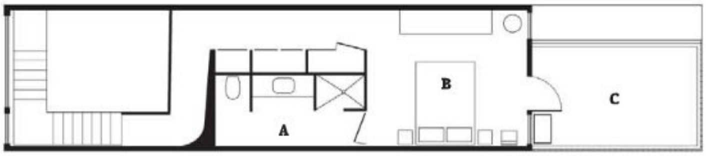


requirements for a three-foot setback on one side; the building code also ruled out windows on the sides of the house. "You couldn't use an old vernacular style because you wouldn't be able to bring in enough light," MacNaughtan says. "We didn't want to have a dark old Victorian. But we also didn't want to have a contemporary bowling alley."

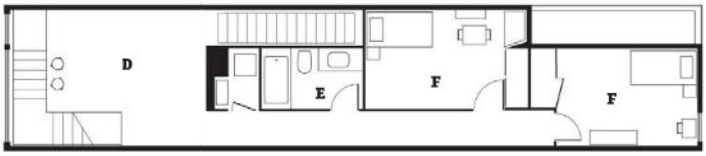
Chong was ready for the challenge. As a new practitioner he appreciated the relative risk the homeowners were taking on him. "This was my first everything," he says. "They had guts." But he had a strong pedigree at firms, including local favorites Shim-Sutcliffe Architects, and he'd coedited a book about the possibilities of building homes on Toronto's patchwork of underused back lanes. "Some of that thinking—a very Jane Jacobs idea of compact living and infill—helped in terms of the scale," he says.

For the Galley House, Chong conceived a 2,100-square-foot house that takes advantage of the lot's shape: a volume that's 32 feet high and 62 feet long, with a series of double-height rooms, with glass on the front, back, and top. Working closely with White

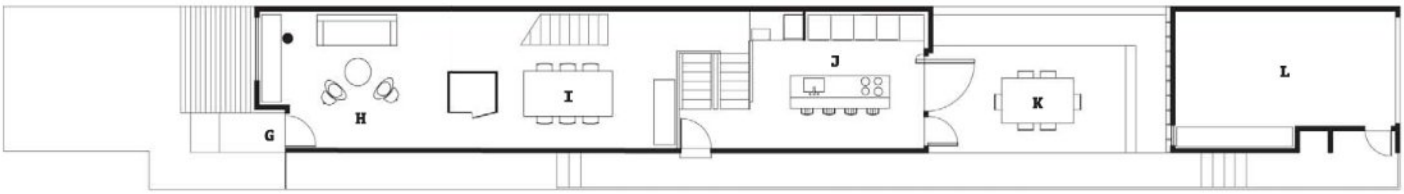





Third Floor




Second Floor




Ground Floor

**Galley House Floor Plans**

**A** Master Bathroom
**B** Master Bedroom
**C** Deck
**D** Family Room
**E** Bathroom
**F** Bedroom
**G** Entry
**H** Living Area
**I** Dining Area
**J** Kitchen
**K** Courtyard
**L** Garage

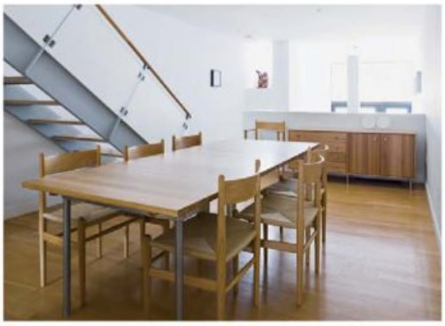
The second-floor family room (opposite) is fronted by an L-shaped staircase with an opaque guardrail that provides some privacy for the front facade. Down the corridor from the boys' bedrooms (opposite, top right), the kids play in the family room just beneath the stairs (opposite, bottom right). In the back, ivy climbs across the garage's raw cedar cladding next to a gate that allows access to the laneway—but the boys prefer to climb the fence (right).

and MacNaughtan, he finessed the plan to include a number of custom features, most notably a snaking path of stairways that spiral up and down through the house.

The south-facing entry and living rooms are at street level; from there it's one step up to the dining room to the north, then five steps down and east to the kitchen, which flows into the back garden. Another stair cuts south up to the second floor, stopping at a spectacular double-height living room. "In the older houses, they all put bedrooms in the front," Chong says. "We all thought it would be a crime to steal the light for a bedroom, which would only be used later in the day. It was all about being greedy with light." That space also holds the house's unusual centerpiece: a winding staircase up to the third-level master suite, showcased behind a huge plane of glass on the front facade.

As construction got under way, the sense of community that White and MacNaughtan were looking for was building up around the project. While wandering the back lane with her young son, Griffin, ▶





White met some new neighbors, Antje Bulthaup and Stefan Sybydlo. "They asked me who would be doing our kitchen," White says. "I thought, I'm an interior designer: I will. But I was worried I wasn't going to complete it in time. So I went home, checked out their website, and nearly fell over."

Antje Bulthaup is a scion of the Bulthaup family, who runs the German manufacturer of high-design kitchens. Staying in Toronto to open a showroom, Bulthaup and Sybydlo had decided to settle in Roncesvalles—where the company had been sending many catalogs to the homes of local designers. The Galley House became their first local project, to the delight of Chong, a huge fan of their products.

A white Bulthaup system fits cleanly into the 13-foot-long kitchen at the back of the house, designed by White with slate floors and brushed-steel accents. (The range hood, a soaring column of steel, echoes the wall sconces White had already picked out.) And it's a fine complement to the rest of the interior, which White—who currently teaches furniture history—has kitted out with oak floors ▸







In the dining room (opposite, top left), furniture by Wegner and local designers Speke Klein blends with the white oak floors and stair. Since the room is at the windowless middle of the house, it borrows light from the kitchen, which, despite its pristine Bulthaup cabinetry and hardware, is the laid-back heart of the house. Chong took advantage of the one-and-a-half-height ceiling to establish some well-hidden storage cabinets.

The master bedroom (right) occupies a private space on the top floor. Griffin's room (below), which is exactly the same size as his brother's, gets good light from the backyard. A rear view of the narrow house (opposite, bottom left) shows how Chong twisted the house's volumes to bring daylight into each room, still leaving enough space in the 16-foot-wide backyard for a garden and comfortable dining area (opposite, top). In the lane behind the garage (opposite, bottom right), Finlay makes use of the occasionally neglected territory.

and furniture by Hans Wegner, Eoos, and Toronto designer-manufacturers Speke Klein. The classic work of Wegner is a touchstone: "These are early modernist solutions for compact living," White says.

White and Chong get excited pointing out the connections between the furniture and the architecture. In the dining room, Chong's carefully detailed railings have an echo in the joinery of oak and steel in Wegner's CH322 dining table nearby. And the correspondence isn't just aesthetic. Chong says he and his clients share the ideals of modern architecture. "When modernism was hatched as an architectural language," he explains, "it was close to this: making use of tight, urban spaces, trying to pull light in, trying to work with a normative family lifestyle."

All of those ideas show up in the pale, well-lit interiors, dotted with the boys' artwork and toys. But the couple's relationship with Chong and his family also reflects an extended sense of kinship. As a housewarming gift, Chong commissioned his artist mother-in-law to make White and MacNaughtan a quilt depicting their house, the names









of everyone involved, and a message: "The heart transforms the house into a home." As White puts it, "Building projects are like building a family."

That sentiment accompanies a broader message about housing. While their home is unique, White and MacNaughtan are demographically middle-of-the-road: a married couple with two kids and a cat. For Chong, that makes their strong commitment to urban living and contemporary design all the more notable. "This is about a family that might have made a flight to the suburbs," he says. In fact, White points out that while living in a 12-foot-wide house involves some sacrifices (there's only a small backyard for the boys to run around in), it's not as tough as you might imagine. "My sister lives in the suburbs with her family," she says. "Everyone thinks we have this small city house with small rooms—but I've measured and we basically have the same room sizes." Which is a sweet payoff for White's faith in a simple idea.



# CREATIVE COMMONS



**Story by Jane Szita**
**Photos by Dean Kaufman**

**Project:** Villa van Vijven
**Architect:** Next Architects
**Location:** Almere, the Netherlands

@ Extended slideshow at dwell.com/magazine

**Craving not just a home but a proper piece of architecture, a handful of design- and business-savvy Dutch families banded together, hired an architect, and set about forming the community that would net them the houses of their dreams.**

**With the idea of communal living all too prone to** conjure visions of student squalor or hippy homeliness, Villa van Vijven comes as a refreshing surprise. The strikingly sculptural bright orange building, reclining in the flat Dutch landscape, accommodates five families under a single, stylish roof. And there's not a whiff of carob in the air.

Step into any one of its five apartments and you are convinced that you've entered an independent piece of architecture entirely. Though they vary in size (the largest is 3,200 square feet), each unit has a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape and its own distinctive layout, decor, and, of course, inhabitants. The group ranges from a business manager to a sports coach to an art historian. "We don't necessarily see each other every day," says Paula van Dijk (the art historian). "Often, we just say hello when leaving or coming home again." Cees Noordhoek, a sales manager who lives here with his wife, Jacquelien, and three kids, adds: "It just doesn't really feel like communal living."

Yet Villa van Vijven is a truly collective and collaborative project, financed and commissioned by ▶



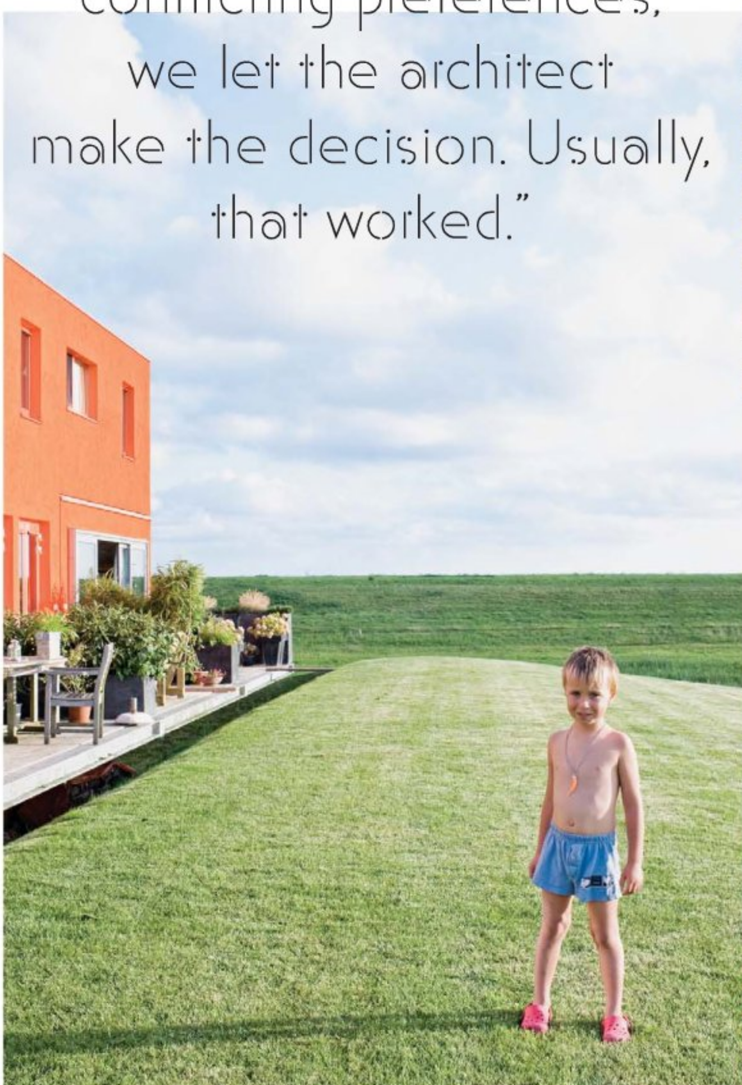
Seen here from the south, Villa van Vijven's orange facade is meant to mimic the tiled rooftops of Holland's country buildings, while the building's horizontal pull echoes the flat landscape. The second-floor living rooms look out on the 4,200-square-foot communal garden, one of only two shared spaces in the whole community. Bob Krone, Koos Sweringa, and Marianne Schram stroll the grounds.





"In every case of conflicting preferences, we let the architect make the decision. Usually, that worked."









five families (19 people in total) who wanted to build a home that they could otherwise never afford: an architecturally high-impact retreat set in extensive gardens, with great views of the surrounding landscape and nearby lake. Residents Johan Bouwmeester and Marlene Blokhuis got the ball rolling when they found the large plot to the southwest of the new and rapidly growing city of Almere, an hour from Amsterdam. The appeal of the relatively rural setting, just 10 minutes from the center of the city, was manifest, and the couple began inviting design-minded acquaintances to join in on the project.

The next step was to find the right architect, one able to embrace the kind of co-creation process that the group needed to accommodate their five different dream homes under one roof. "Our first architect bullied us," Noordhoek recalls. "But then someone told us about this promising young office, Next Architects. So we did two workshops with them and found that they were able to focus our rambling thoughts. That was enough to convince us."

With the architect on board, the business of obtaining financing, permits, and other essential administration was handled, Noordhoek says, "in the same way we organized all details—by mandate. For every part of the process we appointed two managers, who did the field research, asked for competitive bids from suppliers, and had the power to act on behalf of the group. The group as a whole was presented with a detailed proposal for a 'yes' or 'no' vote. We felt that discussions and emotions shouldn't be allowed to run loose. We knew that only when we acted like professional managers would it be possible to build the house on schedule and within budget."

The same tough principles were applied to the design process. "Difficulties mainly arose when individual preferences collided with another person's interests," Noordhoek says. "But in every case of conflicting preferences, we simply let the architect make the decision. Usually, that worked."

"It was very different from having one client," says architect Michel Schreinemachers of Next Architects. "With a group, you have another dynamic entirely. ▸

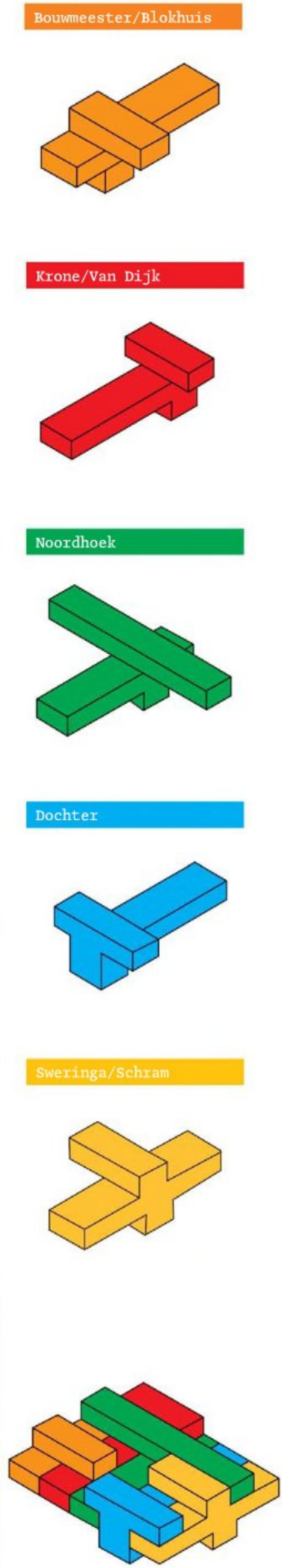
Opposite, clockwise from top left: Marianne Schram reads in her bedroom while her husband, Koos Sweringa, looks in from the stairs below. Paula van Dijk (left) poses with her sister, Vera. Nineteen-year-old Yvette Sweringa arrives at the villa by bike. Thijske Noordhoek relaxes in her study-cum-bedroom. Five-year-old Thomas Dochter plays outside the houses. In addition to the public garden, each unit has its own private plot (above).

Yet it worked quite nicely." At many steps along the way Schreinemachers would propose several options, which the group would discuss and then return with feedback. The final decision, though, was always the architect's. "If I'd suggested the eventual building at the outset, they would have walked away," he adds. "They wanted something very industrial, or thought they did. But they always wanted something architecturally interesting, a landmark building, and this design grew out of our discussions."

Schreinemachers visualized the space as a block of rectangles that he rotated to face different directions, adding and subtracting volumes to reflect the residents' wishes. The result is a Tetris-like layering of interlocking shapes, each with its own character and its own signifying color as visualized in the plans. "When Michel finished his drawings, everyone had to choose the unit they wanted—it was the moment of truth!" Noordhoek says. "And each of the five groups went for a different one, which shows how well the architect interpreted our wishes."

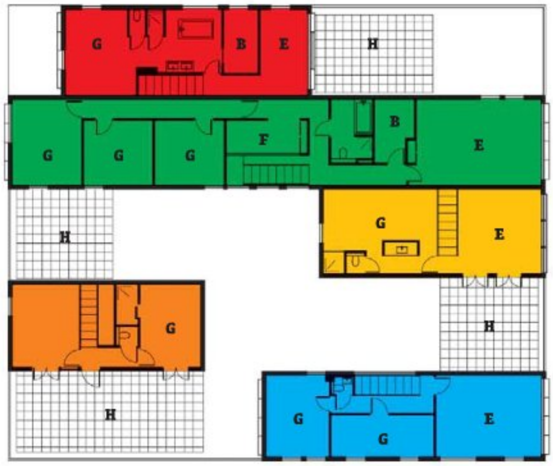
Personal wishes could often be indulged, given that the truly communal areas of the project are just the large garden (each family also has a small private garden as well) and what Schreinemachers calls "the public square" onto which all the front doors open: a glowing orange space carved out underneath the building, where the residents tend to leave their bicycles and bump into each other on the way in or out. This feature, van Dijk says, "gives the building a really playful quality, as does its great openness to the garden." Schreinemachers reports that he achieved it "by raising the living room up to the second floor. You can walk straight into the garden from the living rooms, over the terrace."

Schreinmachers chose orange for the exterior to reference the traditional orange-tiled rooftops of Dutch country buildings. Echoing the splashy chromatics of the outside, the residents quickly set about brightly painting their own interiors. In Paula van Dijk and Bob Krone's minimal white space, for example, there's a vivid splash of yellow, while Koos Sweringa, seeking a bit of formal instruction, ▸







Second Floor

Opposite: Bob Krone and Paula van Dijk go for a walk while Lucas and Jillis Noordhoek lounge on the grass. Their parents, Jacquelien and Cees Noordhoek, chat farther to the right. Johan Bouwmeester built a library (above) out of oak. The communal entrance (below) beneath the building is known as the "public square"; sisters Tessa and Anne Bouwmeester and a friend set off on their bikes.

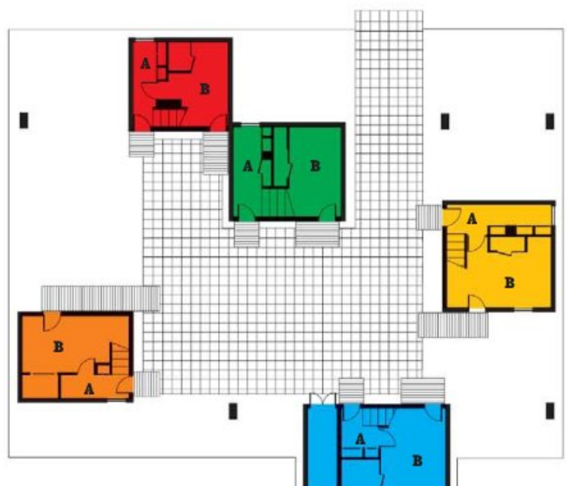
**Villa van Vijven Floor Plans**

**A** Entrance
**B** Storage
**C** Kitchen
**D** Living Area
**E** Room With a View
**F** Study
**G** Bedroom
**H** Terrace



First Floor





Ground Floor







attended a color course that inspired a whole palette of shades.

Color aside, the actual interior design was left to the residents themselves—to keep costs down they moved into bare spaces. Undaunted by empty expanses of naked walls and flooring, each family created an interior that satisfies their individual desires and shows a strong sense of ownership. Noordhoek (who took the green unit) sought ample floor space for his large family, and thus his unit is a generous 3,200 square feet. Bob Krone and Paula van Dijk (who took the red apartment) wanted "big, open spaces with long walls for hanging paintings and as few doors as possible." Koos Sweringa and Marianne Schram (whose two college-age daughters usually stay at the yellow apartment with them on weekends) wanted a "live-in" kitchen that resides in the place of honor that the other families have assigned to the living room. They also have a capsule kitchen next to their bedroom on the second floor, plus a view of the historic tower of Naarden from the same room.

Though the architecture favors idiosyncrasy over uniformity, when it comes to each other, the residents are all quick to note that pragmatism is what they value most. They are unanimously keen to emphasize that they are best neighbors, not best friends. Thus, they maintain a fund for the upkeep of the house and are working on the idea of a shared amphitheater with a fireplace for the garden. But house meetings are kept to a minimum—far fewer than the twice-monthly gatherings demanded by the five-year development process. "The biggest advantage of living together is that we can use each other's expertise," Krone says. "Another advantage is that when you're on vacation, there's someone to pick up the mail, water the plants, and feed the pets."

Even while enjoying all these advantages, "I think we all still wonder what on earth it was that made us go for this unusual design," Noordhoek says, as he strolls through the garden. "But it just stands out in every respect," he adds, turning to look at the villa. "It surprises me every day that we dared to do it. It really is the building of our dreams."

Koos Sweringa and Marianne Schram putter in the kitchen (left) as their daughter Yvette (right) studies in her bedroom. The use of different colors for the various walls was inspired by the orange exterior. Van Dijk's framed pictures stacked on the floor (top left) form an impromptu point of visual interest. Cees, Jacquelien, Jillis, Lucas, and Thijske Noordhoek gather on the lawn (opposite); Andy Dochter looks out of the window while his wife Miriam stands on the terrace with sons Thomas and Vincent.



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# Astro Home

You've known you were destined to dwell in outer space ever since you first saw *The Jetsons*. So, how do you do that? Your new home will be the International Space Station (ISS), the only place in space that is known to be habitable. So far, the crews of the ISS have included pilots, engineers, scientists, and a few eccentric tech-zillionaire tourists. However, serious people are working hard on cheaper civilian rockets, and the station briefly had 13 people aboard it this year, the biggest space crowd ever. It's not a fantasy: The place is as real as Poughkeepsie.

All photos courtesy NASA

**Story by Bruce Sterling**

@ Interview with astronaut Nicole Stott from the ISS at dwell.com/magazine




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Ironically, the most beautiful thing up there, all veterans agree, is Earth. The second-most beautiful is the people.





Let's boldly assume you somehow go there. Space travel is a thrilling and difficult junket, like an expedition to Everest. Good people have died going there and died coming back. The trip up and down involves crushing acceleration and many jolts.

The time you spend in outer space will change your blood and hormone levels, and your bones and muscles will slowly waste away. A three-month stay is optimal; six months is pushing it. You're going to need to get in shape and remember to pack light.

With that understood, let's settle in. Built over the course of ten years by a wide variety of contractors—and still a work in progress—the ISS is a hodgepodge trailer camp graced with quite a lot of Russian design. It features two basic living elements: big round tubes, trucked up there in the American Space Shuttle, and smaller knobby tubes, fired up on other people's rockets. All these pods have been snapped together, mostly end to end, or, as you'll say on the station, "fore and aft."

There are no proper floors nor ceilings, because there isn't gravity like we know it on Earth, just the free-fall feeling of space. This lack of directional pull is the central design fact, and it affects everything, including you. It will take at least three days to learn to move properly, mastering gentle gliding to and from various handholds. You don't want to zoom around circus-style, as the station has many hard, protruding metal surfaces. The place is also festooned with cables: sewer, electrical, electronic, and your new best friends—since they help you keep still—elastic bungee cords.

All portable items must be either tied to the walls or stuck to your body. This fact accounts for the design of your new pants, space life's primary contribution to futuristic fashion. Your space pants have thick Velcro strips across the thighs so you can stick your favorite toys to your legs and fly around barnacled with notepads, pens, and cameras. Ditch your shoes—you'll nearly never be standing on anything. You'll need, however, warm socks since your feet will lack proper blood flow and will always be cold.

The sun rises or sets through the portholes 16 times a day. Because the sunlight in outer space is cruelly bright you'll need a baseball hat and some sunglasses. You might also opt for an open-collar golf shirt in an unnatural color, usually decorated with some nifty astro-industrial logo—a tech college or European space agency.

Your new clothes don't have gravity to cause them to drape or cling to your body, so they give you the hearty look of the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. Much the same goes for your floating hair. Meanwhile the blood rushes out of your hands and feet to pool in your chest and your face. You get a ruddy, pumpkin-headed look as your sinuses stuff up with fluid, hindering your sense of smell. As long as you lack gravity, you will stay that way.

You now live in a totally airtight, multiwindowed terrarium, about the size of a Boeing 767. Your surroundings have the general look and feel of an aircraft fuselage, except with a full-time live-in crew. The color scheme is bright aviation white, accented with the metallic blue handholds, chrome mesh cabling, and glittering gold cable connectors. Bright national flags and punchy-looking mission badges and stickers decorate the bulkheads, along with lots of duct tape and sticky notes, on which are written operational tips for all the hardware.

The station is loud: Air fans and sewage lines compete with the clicks, pops, and whirs from an onboard arsenal of knobby, dial-clustered scientific equipment. Occasionally some tiny piece of space junk whacks into the space station; you can get accustomed to the rest of the noise, but that's one you don't want to hear.

The galley consists of just a microwave, and you'll have to look after yourself. Thanks to ten years of visits by Russians, Americans, Canadians, Japanese, and their friends, there's a veritable global food court of microwavable delights stowed aboard. Cosmonaut chow—jellied fish and borscht—is in especially lavish supply. None of it is fresh, but it's easily as good as the food on most airlines. Soup and coffee come in squeezable ▸

Space life doesn't differ much from the daily grind on Earth—it just demands more attention. Leroy Chiao's daily workout (top) requires tying on both sneakers and a bungee harness before putting in miles on the TVIS ("treadmill vibration isolation system"). A haircut, performed by Tim Kopra for Roman Romanesko (middle), calls for clippers connected to a vacuum to entrap cut hair. Dinner, however, has fewer rules and playing with food is permissible, as Tony Antonelli displays (bottom).

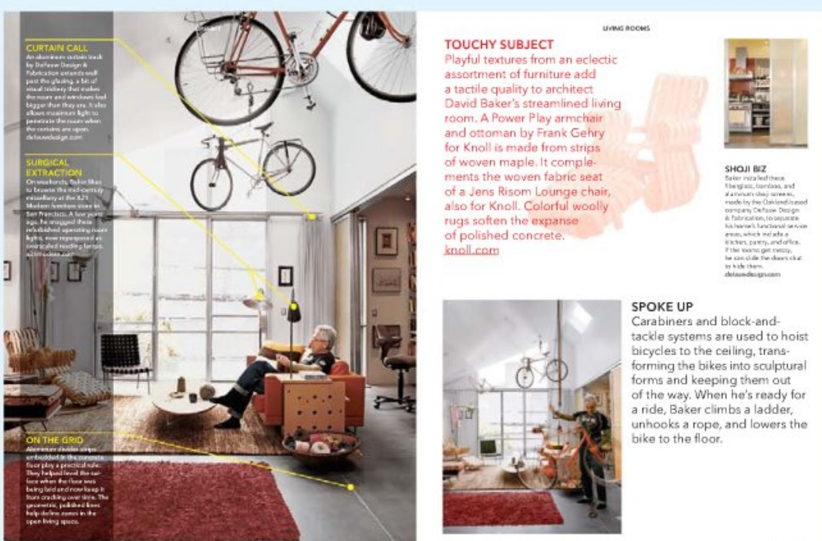



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bags, because liquids left alone in microgravity turn into wobbling water balloons. Crunchy food requires care as crumbly bits fly off at high velocity and end up stuck to the air filters.

Then there's the gym area, where you will be spending a mandatory two and a half hours every day working out to keep your bones and muscles from dwindling away. There you'll find a nifty treadmill equipped with springs and dampeners to keep the entire ISS from vibrating with each step you take, a high-tech bicycle with straps to hold both you and the bike stationary, and a bungee-cord contraption that lets you get in some upper-body work. There are no weights because, well, everyone and everything is weightless.

After one of the 16 sunsets, you go to sleep in a stiff private tent about the size of a phone booth. It's quiet and dark in there, so the racket and the constant sunrises won't bother you. Your suite looks pretty small, but it feels roomy, since you have no need to lie down. You can also latch yourself to a wall in a sleeping bag; the crew will see you, but no one snores in space.

Naturally, you'll want to space walk. Of course, nobody can literally venture "into outer space," because you will die in two minutes without air, as well as freeze. To leave the station, you have to camp cramped inside an airlock for many hours, as the nitrogen boils out of your blood, deep-sea-diver style. The airlock is boring and quite claustrophobic. Then there's your space suit, which is best understood as a micro-spacecraft complete with onboard propulsion and life-support systems.

You'll be outside the ISS for six hours, tops. It's an incredible experience—but after the time in the airlock you probably won't want to repeat it. Space walking is, however, the real deal in space living. It's the best way to see and feel the station as an entity—as the huge multiwinged construction it is.

Compared to life inside, the station feels much different from the exterior. It looks like some monster space moth, a techno-marvel with camera eyes, radio ears, and grappling arms. The long round tubes where you live are just a fraction of it. The rest consists mostly ▸

The ground-control crew sets all the schedules, including when to eat and sleep, since the day's 16 sunsets quickly become disorienting. In the ISS's Kibo laboratory, Koichi Wakata sleeps while secured to the wall in a sleeping bag (top). Bungee cords become your new best friends, as they harness both you and all potentially moving objects to the floors, ceilings, and walls. These elastic workhorses keep Nicole Stott's float through the station (bottom) from being a literal crash course through its contents.





of naked trusses that hold huge solar panels, which glow so brightly they can be seen from Earth with the naked eye.

It's just you and your hissing space suit out in the Carl Sagan cosmos, an awesome empty blackness pierced with harsh untwinkling stars. It's marvelous and scary, but nobody wants to dwell out there. You'll much prefer life back inside the capsules, where there are interesting international experts to socialize with, along with some air, warmth, music, and food.

Social life in the station is polite, professional, diplomatic, and very dutiful. There's a lot going on in this floating crowd of foreign strangers, and little of it involves dreamily staring out the portholes—at least after the first week. Drinking is nigh unheard-of; smoking a catastrophe. No one ever has sex.

Space visitors have created their own unique language, which is 50 years old and consists mostly of acronyms. A simple space heater becomes the ITCS—for "internal thermal control system." The ground-control crew also speaks the language, and they set all the schedules. There's some scientific work involving materials science and biology, but much of station life involves the station itself: dozens of complex, fragile systems that must be kept running so you don't smother, freeze, or tumble wildly out of control.

There's a great deal of computer housework, so you and your new friends are commonly tethered to a station wall, pecking at the keys of Velcroed notebook computers. There's a lot of scrubbing, because any kind of body dirt or damp floats off and congeals in the station's quiet corners.

Supply ships arrive from Russia, Japan, and Europe, and they have to be docked, unloaded by hand, and reloaded with trash, which the station generates in copious amounts. Heaps of supplies have turned the ISS into a space attic. Simply finding gear, digging it out of bags and boxes, assembling it, disassembling it, and lashing it back down is very time-consuming.

You have to test your own health: blood tests, spit tests, urine tests, and psychological tests to assure that you haven't drifted into some spacey frame of mind that might endanger the mission. The Russian psychological tests are especially peculiar.

Life in space is beautiful and sublime. Completely sane people train cheerfully for years, undergoing every kind of trial and indignity for the bare chance to do it. Ironically, the most beautiful thing up there, all veterans agree, is Earth. The second-most beautiful are the people, a technical elite in excellent health and a generally good-looking, congenial bunch. The rest is hardware. It's frail, dangerous, expensive, unique, and impressive, but, at the end of the day, just hardware.

The station is getting old. It has a rough life in the harsh glare of space. It's the freakiest construction project that the human race has ever built. It cost about a hundred billion dollars, and there has never been anything like it. It's also destined to be flung out of the sky in small pieces around the year 2016, unless somebody solves its midlife real-estate crisis.

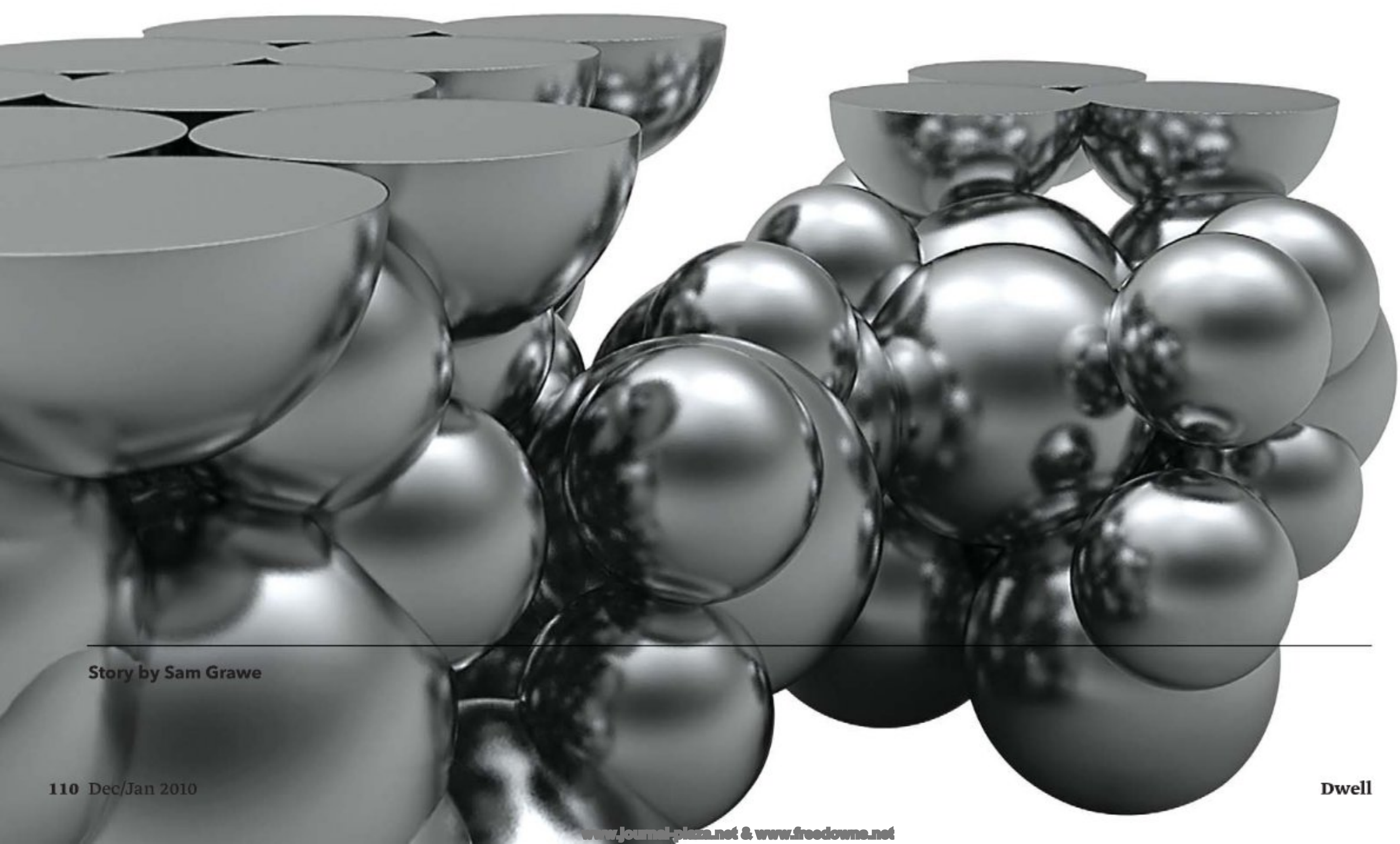
There are no trees nor flowers nor animals. There is no wind nor rain. There are no children. In fact, no little kid has ever been in space. Without children, there's no future. So the ISS isn't the future. Not by itself.

It's what it is: a station in space.



# Mag-Neato!

For almost a decade Dwell has printed countless examples of new furniture designs, but with a handful of exceptions, little has been offered—to us or to you—in the way of truly new ideas about what furniture could be or do. Digital technology and material innovation have pushed the forms and qualities of modern furniture into unexplored realms; however, the industry is still dominated by a staple diet of types: chairs, sofas, tables, and storage. Arguing against the creation of new chair designs would be like debating the need for new novels. That notwithstanding, we still wondered what furniture could be without imposing any constraints on the designer. To find out, we turned to hometown superheroes Council—the San Francisco furniture-design company founded by Derek Chen and winner of the 2009 ICFF Editors Award for furniture.



Story by Sam Grawe


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**Derek Chen is the founder and creative force behind Council, a furniture brand he started in 2007 to bring a more international sensibility of design (and an all-star roster of designers) Stateside. Here, he offers his insight into the evolution of furniture and proposes a new design—Magneto.**

"The types of furniture we have are a direct response to the types of things we do, and these evolve over time. For example, the coffee table now has a magazine rack in it and a place to hide the remote. The dining table is still for dining, but we also have the conference table with an outlet or hole in the middle for wires. There's the emergence and subsequent extinction of the telephone table. With all the time we spend working we have the emergence of the task chair. I do believe there is a strong case to be made for continuing specialization, divergence, and evolution of furniture (video-game chair, anyone?). But I also see something different happening, which is an erosion of formality.

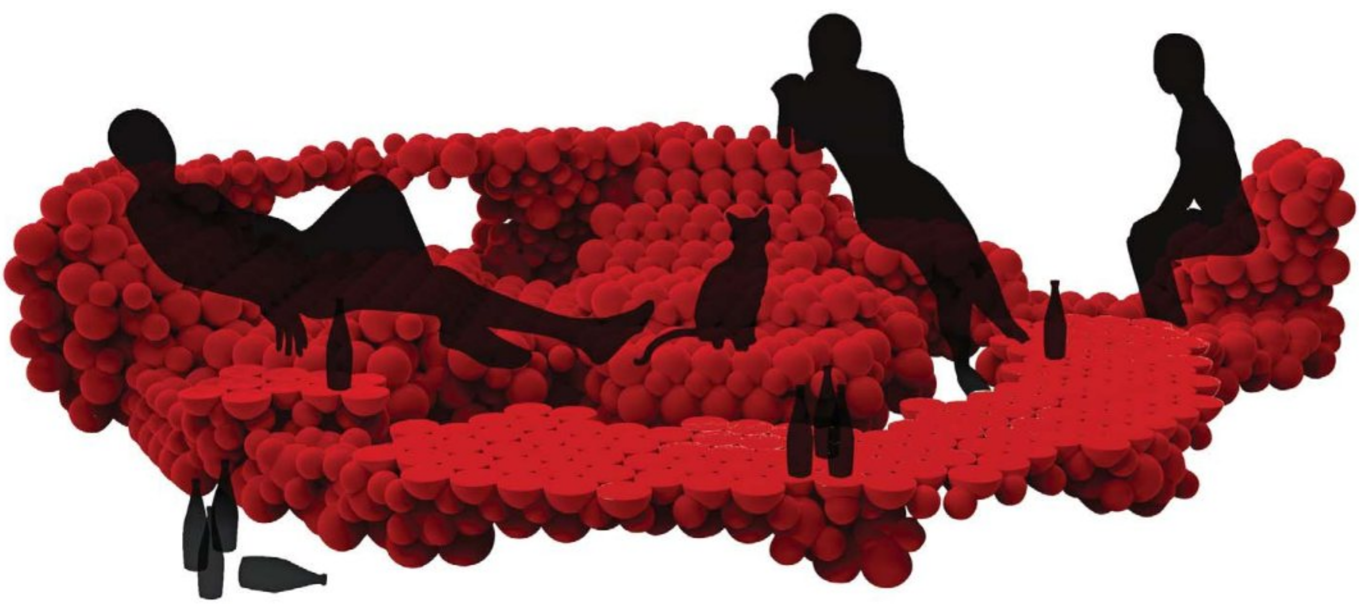
"My perception is that in the past, activities were more regimented, and corresponding furniture could be categorized more easily because activities were more formal. People dined at a dining table and sat on dining chairs. People retired to the parlor and had coffee on the coffee table. We still eat at the dining table, but we also eat in front of the TV, in the kitchen, and in front of the computer. We still put coffee on coffee tables, but we also drink coffee in our cars and at our desks. There is no longer a one-to-one mapping between the things we do and the furniture we do it on or in. I think our less formal lives call for more flexibility in our furniture.

"This idea has been addressed in the past with pieces that can transform to address a wider continuum of human activities. A recliner offers two kinds of sitting. A sofa bed allows you to sit or sleep. We would like to find a way that takes things up a notch in terms of flexibility, so that the pieces hit not just one or two functions but the myriad functions in between that may not have been imagined by the designer. Rather than offer 100 percent sofa versus 100 percent bed, maybe you want to rest on your side and watch the TV with a cup of tea.

"Magneto is a collection of magnetic foam blocks that can be arranged in any way the owner sees fit. It's kind of like a pile of pillows, but the pieces are magnetic or somehow tenacious so that they hold together more supportively rather than tumble away when you lean on them. The foam is firm, but additional hard surfaces can be placed on the blocks to hold a drink or other items. The technology we lack for this concept is the way to make the pieces stick together. Magnets or Velcro are imperfect but one day could improve enough to make Magneto a reality."







With Magneto, Council's prospective design for a modular set of foam-covered building blocks, users would be able to fashion their own furniture to accommodate a variety of activities and sitting positions. The proper technology to make the blocks adhere is all we lack to turn this concept into a product.


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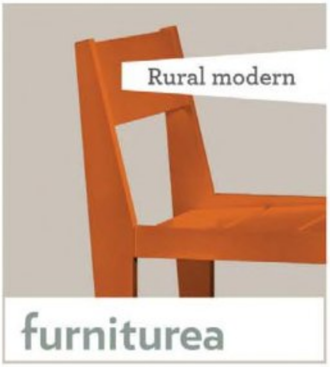
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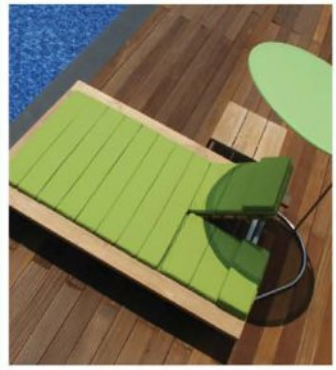
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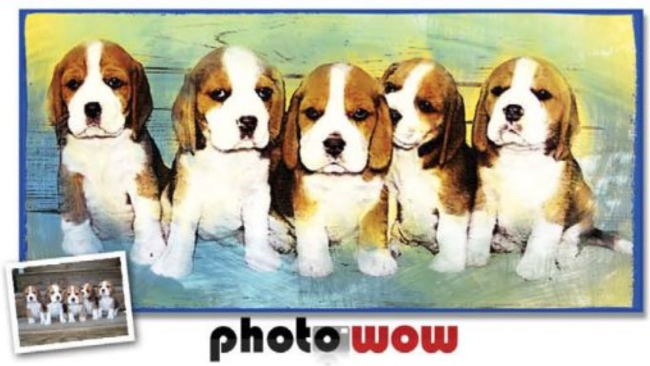


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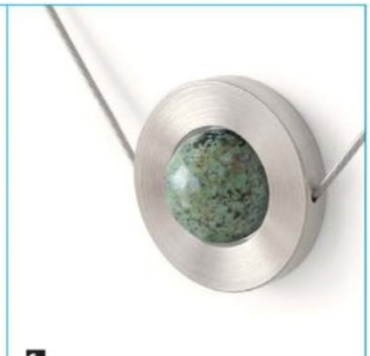



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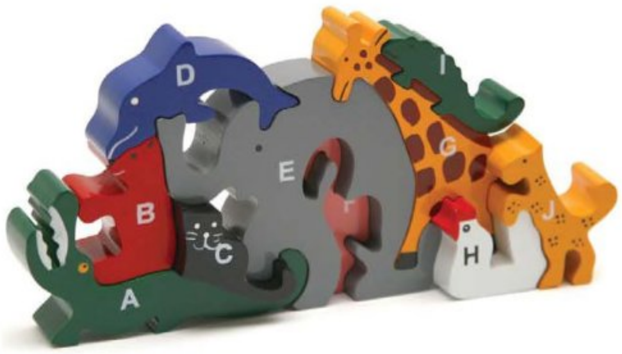
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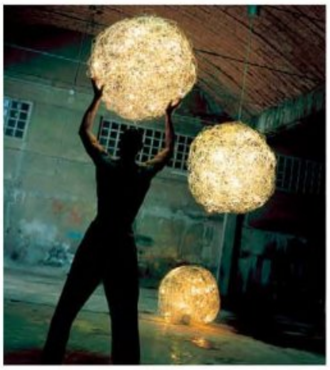
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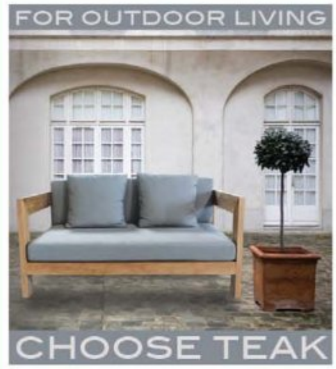


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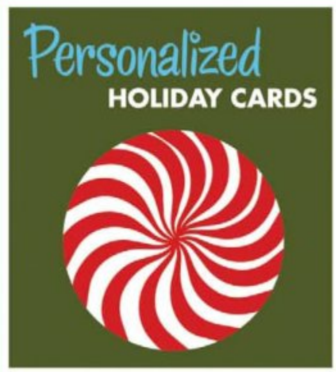



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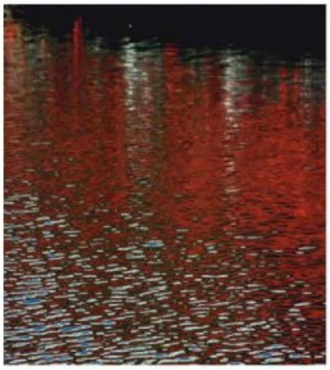

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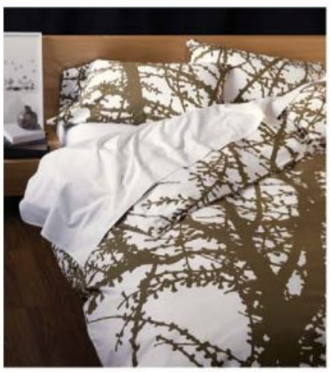


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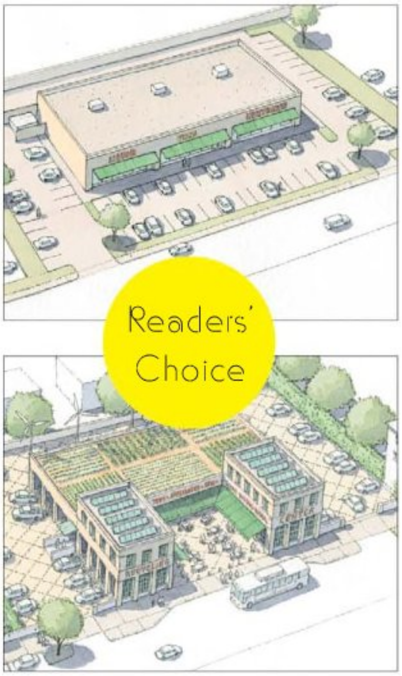
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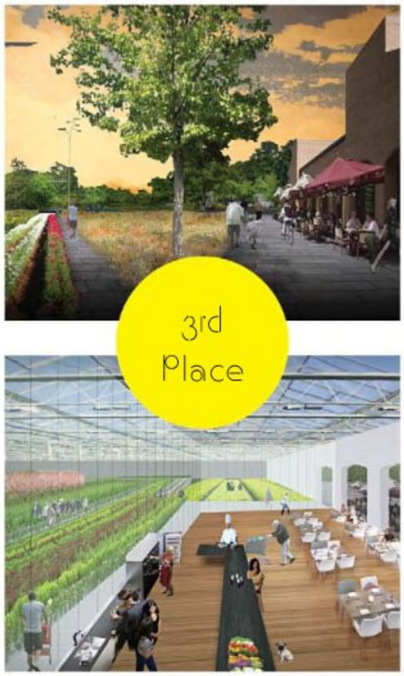
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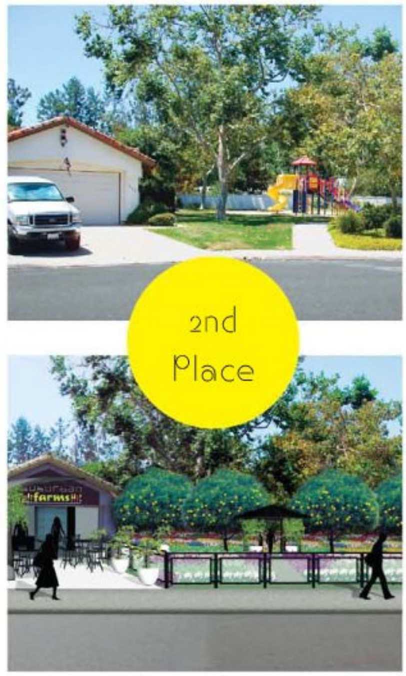
# Sourcing

# Tract Stars

For decades, suburban sprawl has contributed to environmental destruction, but current economic and environmental factors demand that we rethink suburban development. Dwell and Inhabitat teamed up for the 2009 Reburbia competition, in which we asked designers to propose sustainable solutions for the future of the 'burbs. Hundreds of entries came in; thousands of people voted. And the winners are…



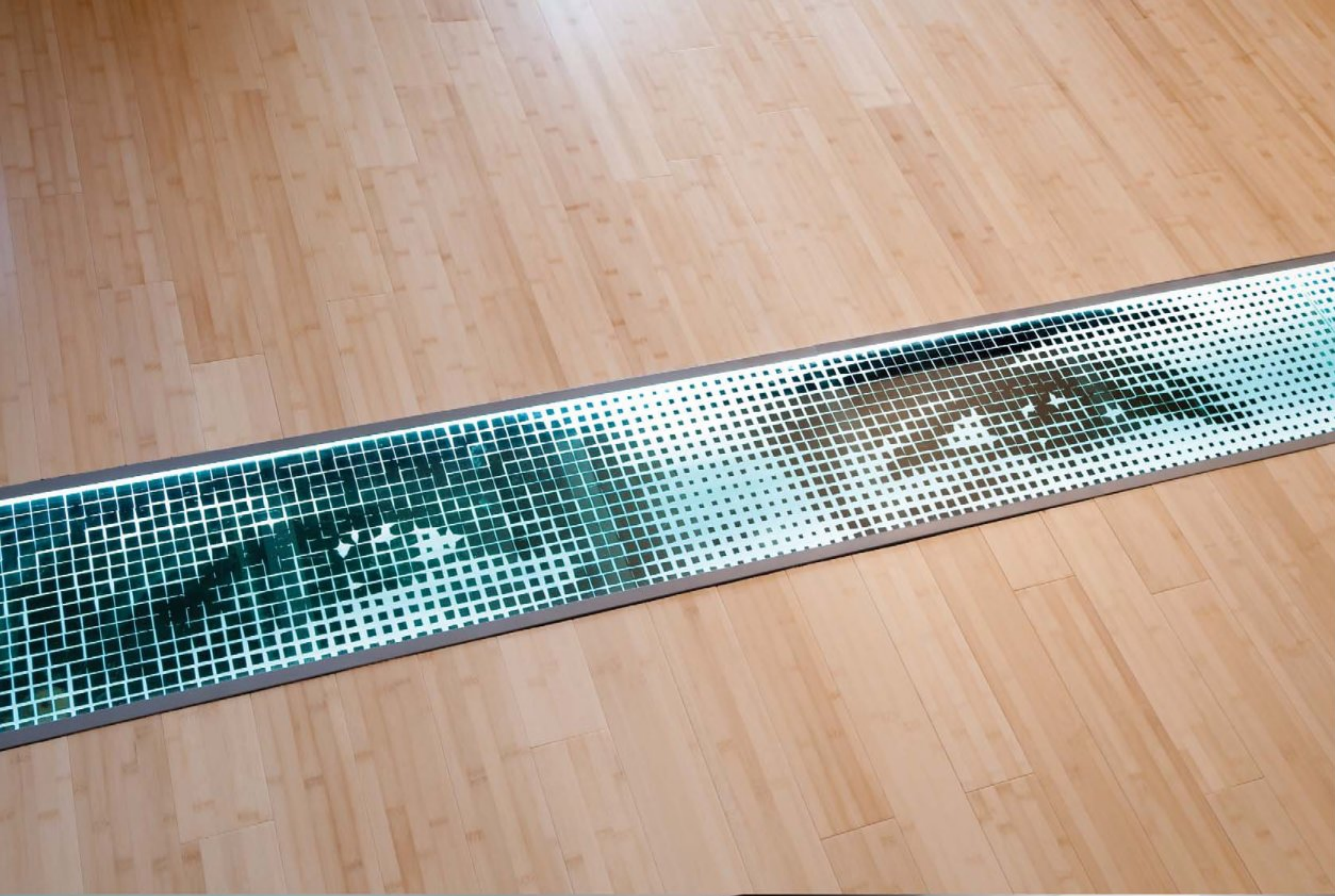

**Sprawl Repair Toolkit**
**by Galina Tahchieva and Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company**
This set of simple infill techniques can be used to retrofit five typical suburban building types, either by repurposing or adding on to existing structures. All use renewable technology and energy-efficient practices, often taking advantage of suburbia's excessive setbacks and parking lots. These modest interventions can create a more diverse, cohesive, walkable urban fabric. In the example pictured here, a strip mall becomes a recycling center with a green roof and two wings with solar panels that frame a courtyard, which stretches to the sidewalk.

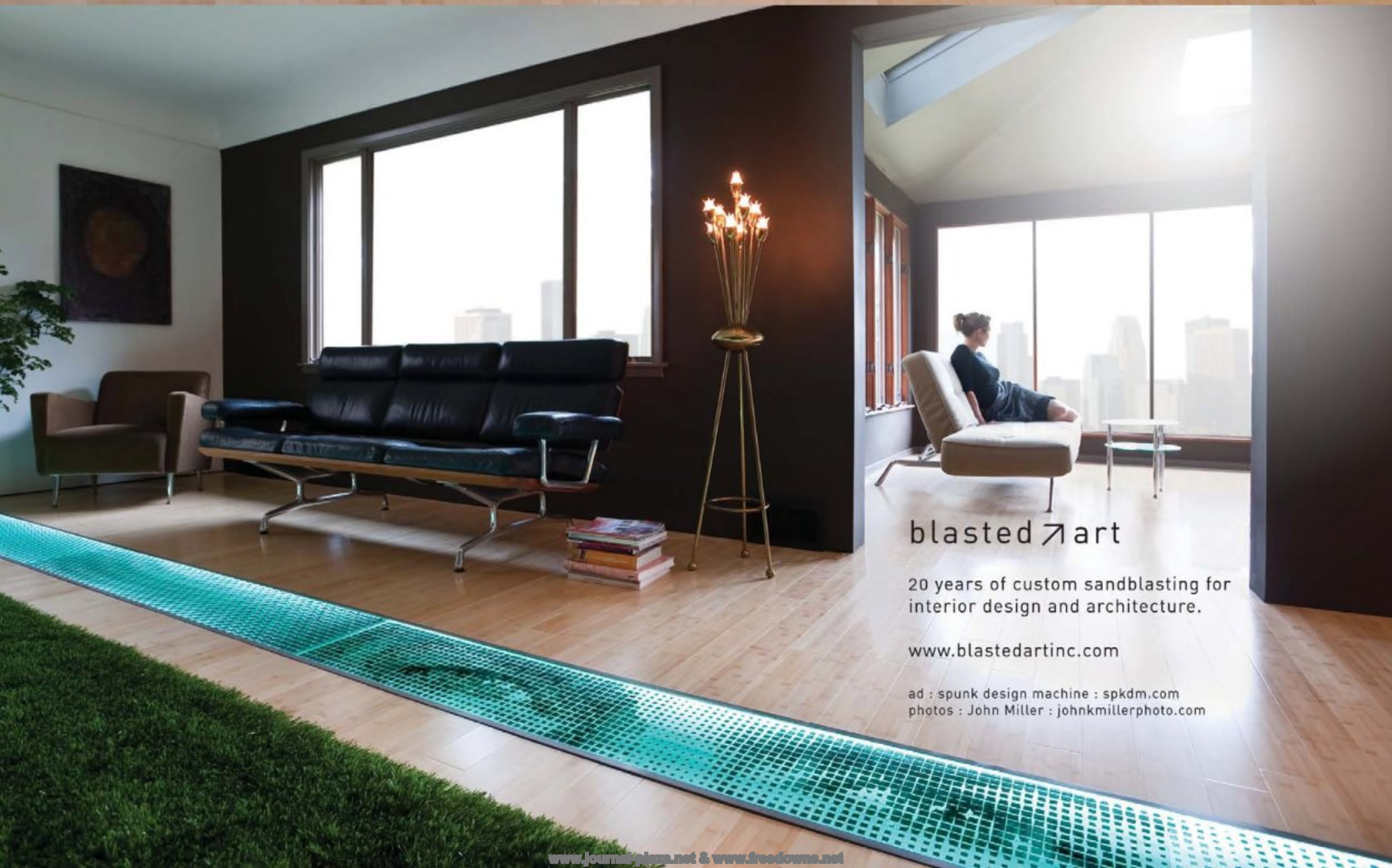
**Big Box Agriculture**
**by Forrest Fulton**
As suburban big-box stores either close down or relocate, we're left with the opportunity to reclaim these vast spaces for productive activity. This proposal reverses the function of a typical mega-supermarket from food retailer to food producer: The parking lot becomes a farm, and space inside the store becomes a greenhouse and restaurant. A portion of the roof is used for growing food. Members of the community push their shopping carts through the suburban farm, picking their produce straight off the vine, then take it inside to the chef, who will prepare a fresh meal on the spot.

**Entrepreneurbia**
**by Troy Silva**
Eschewing an additive approach to solving the problem, Entrepreneurbia simply abolishes poorly conceived zoning laws that segregate residential and commercial structures, attracting small businesses and start-ups into traditionally domestic areas. This model transforms inefficient single-family dwellings and decorative landscaping into intelligent enterprise zones. Eventually, the needs of the neighbors are met within walking distance of their homes, reducing car dependency and fostering self-sustaining communities. Better public transit will enable easy trips into the urban core. ▶

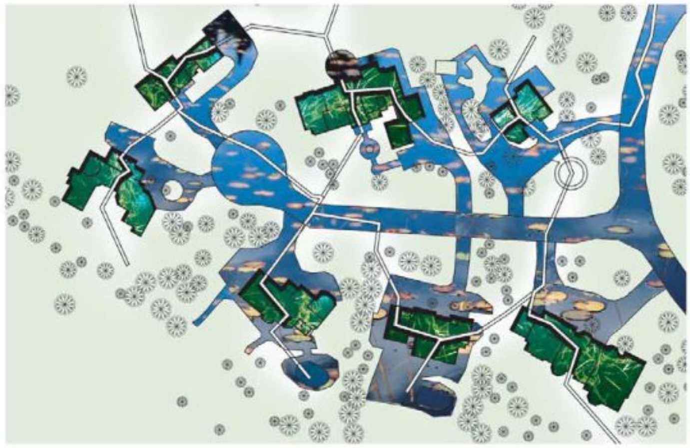
**Story by Sarah Rich**

With the Sprawl Repair Toolkit (left), the rooftop of a strip mall becomes a productive landscape. In Big Box Agriculture (middle), the interior of the store transforms into a restaurant serving local food, much of it grown in the parking lot-cum-garden outside. In Entrepreneurbia (right), old McMansions have turned into shops.




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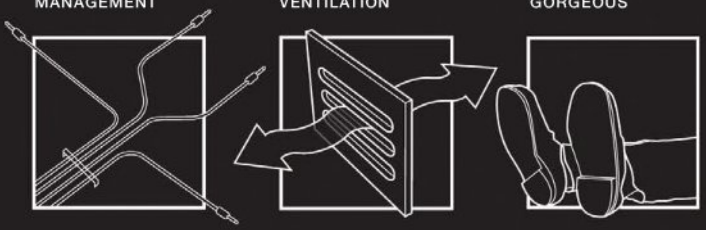
**by Calvin Chiu**

From climate forecasts to real estate projections, the future of suburbia looks bleak. To make the most of the anticipated downfall of so much overdeveloped land, Frog's Dream transforms vacant homes into natural water-treatment machines that can serve nearby cities. A microwetland ecosystem of plants, algae, bacteria, fish, and clams will form on the unmaintained lawns, producing food and oxygen for larger plants and wildlife. Clean water will be transported into cities using existing highway systems, which will also carry bikes and trains. By allowing dead housing stock to be taken over by self-sustaining biological systems, the dense cities of our future will also be sustainable, contained within a ring of wild land.

On the former front yard of a large suburban home, frogs, reeds, and weeds have claimed their territory. According to the Frog's Dream proposal, this second-wave wilderness can become a source of sustenance for cities while making suburbs sustainable once again.

For more on the competition and to see other entries, go to re-burbia.com.


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